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*Gas P. Sheraton*  
THE FOUR GOSPELS:

THEIR AGE AND AUTHORSHIP.

TRACED FROM THE FOURTH CENTURY INTO THE FIRST.

By JOHN KENNEDY, M.A., D.D.

EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION,

By REV. EDWIN W. RICE.

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"We have not followed cunningly devised fables . . . but were eye-witnesses of his majesty."—AN APOSTLE.

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*"It may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers, and than all the exhortations of moralists."*—LECKY.

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BY THE AMERICAN EDITOR.

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# THE FOUR GOSPELS.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

BY THE REV. EDWIN W. RICE.

THE testimony in support of the four Gospels has increased in quantity and force under the sharp research awakened by modern criticism. Successive attacks of infidels and adversaries have unintentionally rendered a useful service, in calling forth the fullest evidence of the truthful character of these inspired narratives, and in exhibiting the irrefragable nature of the evidence.

Sunday-school teachers and missionary laborers want a work which will present this testimony in respect to the Gospels, in a clear compact form, suitable for those who have neither the time nor the technical learning required to master larger works on the subject.

The evidence in support of the genuineness and truthfulness of the four Gospels, has usually been regarded as including two main lines of testimony: 1. The internal evidence, or that which appears from the naturalness, style, and character of the documents themselves, attesting their truthfulness; 2. The external evidence.

There are, in fact, however, not less than four distinct classes of evidence in respect to the gospel histories:

1. The internal evidence.
2. The testimonies of adversaries.
3. The testimony of believers, or that derived from early Christian writers.
4. The proof from the past and present existence of Chris-

tianity, tracing its origin chiefly to these Gospels or to the facts they narrate.

This form of presenting the testimony is clearer and more satisfactory than the other.

The most careful examination and sifting of each of these four independent lines of evidence, force the candid mind to the same conclusion respecting the trustworthiness of each of the four Gospels, and their indubitable character as a part of the Christian Scriptures. It is not important to determine which one of these lines of proof is the strongest. To the scholarly reader accustomed to weigh grammatical and critical arguments, and delighting in analytical processes, the evidence of the first class—the internal evidence—might appear more satisfactory and indisputable; to some the second and third classes of evidence would appear more effective; to others the last class of testimony appears the strongest.

This new work by Dr. Kennedy, lately issued by the London Sunday-School Union, is confined chiefly to the testimony belonging to the third class, or that given by Christian writers. Of his plan in arranging the evidence he says, "I have long been of opinion that the more common way of tracing the stream *from* the fountain fails to convey an adequate idea of the evidence on which rests our faith in the four Gospels as primitive and genuine records of the life of Jesus Christ. It seems to me that we obtain a more truthful impression of it by tracing the stream *to* the fountain. This is what I have endeavored to do in the following pages, beginning at a period at which the stream is broad and undoubted."

The real question to be settled respecting the four Gospels is stated by the author in his preface thus: "Were the authors of these books contemporary with Christ and his generation, and competent by knowledge, either personal or personally acquired, to record faithfully the sayings and doings of the Great Master? If this question be determined in the affirmative, neither believer nor unbeliever has any reason for disjoining from the books the only names which history has ever connected with them."

It would not be fatal to the authority of the Gospels, how-

ever, if it should be proved that the first Gospel was written by another than Matthew, since all the Gospels were anonymous. It would be only necessary to establish that the Gospels were written, as already stated, by apostolic men. The titles to the Gospels, it is agreed by critical scholars generally, were not affixed by the writers of those histories, but were added at a very early date by others, who, it is believed, were able to ascertain certainly respecting the true authorship of each Gospel.

A discussion of the purely critical questions respecting the mode in which the inspired writers composed the Gospels, does not come within the scope and purpose of this work. If it be established that Christians of the apostolic age, and immediately subsequent thereto, received the Gospels now extant as inspired writings, and, therefore, of divine authority, critical discussions on the *mode* of their composition are of secondary interest. Whether the theory, that the evangelists used oral reports or traditions of the sayings and acts of Christ, current in the church, be accepted; or the documentary theory, that there were already written and fragmentary accounts of these events, which the writers employed in preparing their Gospels, be maintained, are questions comparatively unimportant when the books are proved to have been generally accepted from the era of the apostles as divinely authorized records, written by inspired men.

While we possess a great number of written copies of the New Testament books, some of them conceded to be very ancient, reaching back to within about two hundred years of the times of the apostles, it is almost unnecessary to remind the young reader that no manuscript copy of the Gospels, made by the evangelists themselves, has come down to us.

Among the important MS. copies of the Gospels and other New Testament books, of a very ancient date, now extant, the most important are :

1. The Sinaitic, now in St. Petersburg, discovered by Tischendorf in 1859, in the convent of Mt. Sinai; was written about the middle of the fourth century, A. D., probably at Alexandria.

2. The Alexandrine, in the British Museum, presented to Charles I., in 1628, by Lucar the Patriarch of Alexandria, and later of Constantinople; was written not later than the middle of the fifth century. A. D.
3. Vatican Manuscript, in the Vatican Library at Rome, written in the fourth century, A. D.
4. Ephraim, in the National Library at Paris, written in the fifth century.
5. Bezaë, in the library at Cambridge, England, presented to it in 1581 by Theodore Beza; has the Gospels and the Acts.

Besides these there are in existence six or seven more of the older MSS. in uncial or capital letters. Next to these in value are the ancient versions, as the Latin and the Syriac, and thirdly, the MSS. in cursive or running hand, of later date than the uncial MSS., and of which more than five hundred have been collated on the Gospels alone. (See Schaff's edition of Lange's Matthew.)

There has been remarkable progress in the textual criticism of the New Testament within the past forty years. This is indicated by the number of uncial MSS. (upwards of ten distinct sets) discovered within that period; the collection of the best MSS., and the publication of these scholarly labors, including those of Tischendorf; the discovery of the Curetorean Syriac version; the examination of some of the best cursive MSS.; and the attempts to fix the pure text by Griesbach (1754-1812), Lachmann (1793-1851), Tischendorf (1815-1874), Tregelles (1813-1874), and of Westcott and Hort, not yet published, though the results of their labors were available to the Bible Revision Committee.

Although we have no copy of the Gospels executed by the evangelists themselves, this should no more invalidate our acceptance of them as genuine, than the similar fact that we possess no autograph copies of the writings of Plato, Xenophon, Cicero, Livy, Cæsar, or any of the other ancient Greek and Latin writers, whose works are universally received as genuine. Furthermore, we possess a far greater number of well-authenticated ancient copies of the four Gospels, and those that are more complete and accurate, than of the writings of any secular author whatever of equal age.

The evidence deducible from the Gospels themselves, from the writings of adversaries and secular authors, from Christian writers, from the catacombs and similar early remains, and from the great fact of the existence of Christianity itself to-day, the origin of which must be accounted for on some reasonable and adequate ground, form distinct chains of evidence in favor of the truthfulness of the inspired Gospels that cannot be broken.

Concerning the value of the special testimony of the Christian fathers offered in this book, Prof. Rawlinson ably maintains that it is a sound principle of civil jurisprudence which assigns special weight to the testimony of those who have the prospect of immediate death before their eyes, as had the Christian witnesses of early ages. "The early converts knew that they might at any time be called upon to undergo death for their religion. Ignatius, Polycarp, Papias, Quadratus, Justin, Irenæus, certainly suffered death on account of their religion; and every early writer advocating Christianity, by the fact of his advocacy, braved civil power and rendered himself liable to a similar fate. When faith is a matter of life and death, men do not lightly take up with the first creed which happens to hit their fancy. It is clear that the early converts had means of ascertaining the historic accuracy of the Christian narrative, very much beyond ourselves. They could examine and cross-question witnesses, compare their several accounts, inquire how their statements were met by their adversaries, consult heathen documents of the time, thoroughly and completely sift the evidence." Assuredly in the face of shame, suffering, the rack, scourge, cross, and stake, to imagine that they did not do this, is to declare that they were devoid of all sense and reason, and blindly or stoically indifferent to the most horrible torture, and the most cruel and ignominious death. In view of the trying circumstances under which they bore their testimony, their evidence assumes vastly increased weight and solemnity.

The present editor has added a large number of citations from the early writers at the end of several of the chapters, especially to Chapters III., VI., VIII., and XI. Whenever practicable, these proofs are arranged in parallel columns to show their relevancy.

They are taken chiefly from the works of Eusebius and Lardner, which some readers of this volume could not readily procure. A list of principal witnesses has also been collated by the editor, and follows this introduction. These additions, it is believed, will make the book even more acceptable to those who have no "learned leisure" to read larger works, nor will they render it less likely to be of service (in accordance with the desire of the author) "to Sunday-school teachers and other private students, and a suitable hand-book in the junior classes of theological colleges."

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PRINCIPAL CHRISTIAN WRITERS WITNESSING TO THE EARLY  
ORIGIN AND GENERAL ACCEPTANCE OF THE GOSPELS.

COUNCIL OF LAODICEA, A. D. 364. The records of this Council give a formal catalogue of the books of the New Testament. They are the same as now accepted.

COUNCIL OF NICÆA OR NICE, A. D. 325. This Council appears to have accepted the Four Gospels and New Testament Canon as already settled. This is implied from their decisions on doctrinal questions, especially respecting Arianism.

ATHANASIUS, A. D. 326, who says: "The books of the New Testament are these: the four Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; then after these," &c. In his writings he quotes all the present books of the New Testament.

JEROME, A. D. 322. Large portions of his works have been preserved. He states: "The first [writers in the New Testament] are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

ARIUS OF ALEXANDRIA, A. D. 316-335. He was the founder of the heretical sect called Arians, yet adhered to Christianity, and wrote several letters in defence of his views, referring to the Gospels and other Scripture to sustain them. Two letters and his confession, with a few fragments of other writings, have come down to us.



EUSEBIUS, A. D. 315. He is the author of an "Ecclesiastical History" (to A. D. 324). The work is still extant; an English translation is issued by Bagster & Sons, London.

ALEXANDER, BISHOP OF ALEXANDRIA, A. D. 313. Called "the great" by Theodoret. Only two epistles by him now remain—one in Soerates, the other in Theodoret.

LACTANTIUS, A. D. 306, *seq.* Jerome names fifteen books written by Lactantius. Most of them are lost; but portions of the more important works have been preserved: among them "Divine Institutions." He refers to facts respecting Christ and his work that are given in the Gospels.

ARNOBIUS, THE RHETORICIAN, A. D. 306. He wrote a work against heathenism, commending Christianity as true, from the miracles of Christ, his dignity, and the progress of his doctrine, showing his acquaintance with the facts of the Gospel history.

PAMPHILUS, OF CÆSAREA, A. D. 290. He founded a Christian library at Caesarea, but it is not certain that any work of his remains.

METHODIUS OF PATARA AND TYRE. He wrote several important works, especially one against Porphyry. Only small fragments are preserved.

VICTORINUS, OF PETTAW, GERMANY, A. D. 290. He wrote extended commentaries in Latin upon books of the Old and of the New Testament; among them was a Commentary on Matthew. He speaks of the four Gospels as four living creatures, referred to in Revelation.

DIONYSIUS, OF ROME, A. D. 260. Fragments of his writings are preserved by Athanasius.

NOVATUS OR NOVATIAN, A. D. 250. He wrote a number of treatises on religion. A few fragments have come down to us, but his testimony is clear and explicit.

CYPRIAN, OF CARTHAGE, A. D. 250. He was a voluminous writer, and several of his works are preserved, though the genuineness of some ascribed to him has been disputed.

DIONYSIUS, OF ALEXANDRIA, A. D. 247. He wrote many treatises and letters; one, an epistle to Basilides, is preserved entire; in it he quotes each of the four evangelists by name.

ORIGEN, A. D. 230. An extensive traveller and voluminous writer. Many of his works have come down to us; in them are three catalogues of the New Testament books, which include the four Gospels. The evidence which could be cited from his writings would nearly fill a volume.

JULIUS AFRICANUS, A. D. 220. He was not a voluminous writer, and some fragments of works ascribed to him have been disputed as to their genuineness. One work cited by Eusebius is, "Concerning the disagreement supposed to be between the Gospels in the genealogy of Christ."

HIPPOLYTUS, A. D. 220. He wrote apologetic works, though most of the fragments which have come down to us are thought to be corrupted in their text.

APOLLONIUS, A. D. 211. He wrote brief treatises, passages from which we have in Eusebius. In one he quotes from the Gospel according to Matthew.

MINUCIUS FELIX, A. D. 210. He wrote as an apologist. The genuineness of "Octavius," one work ascribed to him, is questioned.

SYMMACHUS, A. D. 200. He made a Greek version of the Old Testament, and, according to Lardner, wrote against the Ebionite copy of Matthew's Gospel, as corrupted.

TERTULLIAN, A. D. 200. He was a man of letters and wide culture, being a master of the Greek and Latin. Tertullian wrote many books, some of which are lost. In his "Apologies," especially those against Marcion, he gives positive and clear

testimony in respect to the Gospels, their authors, and the reasons in favor of their credibility.

CLEMENT, OF ALEXANDRIA, A. D. 194. An able and discriminating writer, fragments of whose works are preserved by Eusebius, containing testimony in respect to the Gospels.

PANTÆNUS, A. D. 192. He was of Alexandria, and in charge of a school, being succeeded in it by Clement, through whom only a fragment of his testimony comes to us.

THEOPHILUS, OF ANTIOCH, A. D. 181. Jerome calls Theophilus the seventh bishop of Antioch after Peter. Some commentaries ascribed to him are now held to be those of some other writer; but there are treatises to Autolyeus, by Theophilus, which are undoubtedly genuine. In these he quotes from the Gospels as part of the Scripture.

ATHENAGORAS, A. D. 178. The only work of importance by this writer is an apology, containing the Elements of Religion, inscribed to Antoninus and Commodus. In it he makes clear references to the Gospels of Matthew and John.

IRENÆUS, OF LYONS, A. D. 150-178. The testimony of this eminent Christian writer is very distinct respecting the four Gospels, and the authorship of them.

THE EPISTLE OF THE CHURCHES OF VIENNE AND LYONS, A. D. 175-180. This was a letter of sympathy sent to churches in Asia and Phrygia, in view of the sufferings of their martyrs, probably in the time of Marcus Antoninus. Passages are cited from the Gospels in the exact words of the Greek version.

MELITO, OF SARDIS, A. D. 180. He wrote a work on the Law and Prophets, and in the preface to this book is a catalogue of the books of the Old Testament, the first list of the kind known to be recorded by any Christian writer. Eusebius preserves a fragment of an apology by this writer addressed to Antoninus.

HEGESIPPUS, OF ROME, A. D. 180. Wrote five books on apostolic preaching.

**TATIAN, A. D. 170.** A follower of Justin, the Martyr, though he afterward departed from the Catholic or orthodox faith. He wrote an oration against the Gentiles.

**DIONYSIUS, OF CORINTH, A. D. 170.** The author of seven letters, important portions of which are preserved by Eusebius.

**JUSTIN, THE MARTYR, A. D. 140.** In a dialogue with Trypho, Justin relates his own conversion. Large portions of his writings have been preserved, especially of this dialogue and of two apologies.

**PAPIAS, A. D. 116.** Irenæus speaks of Papias as a hearer of John and a companion of Polycarp. Eusebius refers to five books written by Papias, called, "An Explication of the Oracles of the Lord."

**POLYCARP, OF SMYRNA, A. D. 108.** Irenæus declares that, "Polycarp always taught those things which he had learned from the Apostles, which he delivered to the Church, and alone are true." Polycarp was the author of an Epistle to the Philippians, which contains clear allusions to the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and Mark.

**IGNATIUS, OF ANTIOCH, A. D. 107.** Eusebius and Jerome refer to Ignatius as the second bishop of Antioch, Euodius being mentioned as the first. Several of his Epistles are still extant in the Greek, and in an ancient Latin version. Of the two editions of these, Lardner, and others, regard the larger as an interpolation of the smaller, made by some Arian writer, and hence, that the smaller edition has the best title to the name of Ignatius.

**SHEPHERD OF HERMAS, A. D. 100.** Jerome refers to the author of this book as the Hermas named in the Epistle to the Romans (16: 14). This work was written in Greek, but only a Latin version is now extant. It is in three books, having many allusions and references to the Gospels.

CLEMENT, OF ROME, A. D. 96. In an Epistle to the Corinthians, he quotes from three of the Gospels. Jerome says Paul refers to this Clement in Philippians (4 : 3).

EPISTLE OF BARNABAS, A. D. 71. This was formerly ascribed to Barnabas, the companion of Paul, but it is now generally held not to be his. Lardner, however, after examining the evidence, is of opinion that it was "probably Barnabas's," and certainly ancient, written soon after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, A. D. 70.

## CHAPTER FIRST.

### AUTHENTICITY OF THE GOSPELS.

#### PART I.—THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE GOSPELS DETERMINABLE AND DETERMINED BY THE ORDINARY LAWS OF HISTORIC CRITICISM.

WE do not ask that the Christian Gospels be exempted from the ordinary laws of historic criticism. On the contrary, we see Divine wisdom in the fact that our faith in them, as genuine histories of Jesus of Nazareth, depends on these laws. Somewhere about the ninth century a fable appeared, characteristic of the age, to this effect: The Council of Nice wished to determine which of the immense numbers of gospels then in existence were genuine and which were spurious. To obtain a Divine decision of the question, all the gospels were placed under the Communion Table, and the Lord was besought that the inspired writings might get upon the table, while the spurious ones remained underneath. In answer to this prayer, the four inspired Gospels were found *on* the table in the morning, and were declared canonical; the rest were found *underneath* the table, and were ordered to be burned. This story, it will be observed, was first heard of five hundred years after the Council to which it refers; and its absurdity throws into bright relief the naturalness and credibility of the true grounds of our faith in the genuineness of the four Gospels.

In making historical evidence the ground of our faith, we exclude Church authority, whether it be that of Councils or of the Pope. An Englishman, who has labored much to magnify the personal authority of the popes, tells us that St. Gelasius, in the year 494, by his supreme authority, declared the number of the canonical books. "The canon of Holy Scripture," he says, "rested on that particular act, without any decree of an Œcumenical Council, until the definition of the Council of Trent in the year 1546." This statement is im-

A ninth cen-  
tury fable.

Historic, not  
Church, au-  
thority.

Cardinal  
Manning.

portant in its *negative* aspects. No Council found it necessary to assert authoritatively what books were canonical, till the middle of the sixteenth century. No pope found it necessary to pronounce authoritatively on the subject, till the very close of the fifth century. So far we accept the cardinal's statement. It is not worth while to discuss the acts and character of Pope or Bishop Gelasius, whose position in relation to Christian orthodoxy is doubtful. But history had already decided what books were canonical and what were not; in other words, what books could claim an apostolic origin, or apostolic sanction, and what books could not.

This was the test to which those writers appealed of whom we shall speak immediately, who connect the age of our oldest manuscripts with the age of the Apostles. Origen introduces a statement which will be quoted by and by, that one Gospel was written by Matthew, one by Mark, one by Luke, one by John, with the words—"As I have understood by tradition." History appealed to by Origen.

And it is important that we should understand what this expression means. Negatively it means that it was not by concerted action, or as the result of united deliberation, that the Churches in all parts arrived at a common conclusion in regard to these Gospels. No such concert ever existed; no such deliberation ever took place. It was by a "tradition" common to all, whatever that means, that all, acting separately, acknowledged the four Gospels as Divine Scriptures. This "tradition" excludes not only the idea of united or concerted action, but likewise the idea that it was on the strength of internal evidence that the Churches accepted these Gospels. That the external evidence was confirmed by the internal, we cannot doubt. That the superiority of the four over all such others as, Luke says, "many had taken in hand to set forth," made itself felt, need not be doubted. But the primary ground of their acceptance was the "tradition" of the Churches.

This term "tradition" is of ill-repute in modern controversy. It suggests to us at once the idea of a claimant to authority co-ordinate with the authority of the written word of God. The Church, so-called, or certain Churches calling themselves Catholic, claim the right to interpret the Holy

"Tradition,"  
what it  
means.

Scripture in the light of "tradition," or of traditionary doctrines which they say have come down to them from the Fathers. But we must entirely dissociate the term, as used by Origen, from this Catholic and Protestant controversy. It has no relation to the subject. It refers simply to the testimony to a fact transmitted, either orally or in writing, from one generation to another. When Origen ascribes certain gospels to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, on the strength of "tradition," and indicates that the Churches universally did the same, the meaning is, that they do so on the strength of the historical evidence which had come down through successive generations from the beginning.

The genuineness and authority of the four Gospels were maintained by Tertullian, who preceded Origen by thirty or forty years, likewise, on the express ground of a very sure and credible testimony of the Churches from the time of writing them to his own age. "If it be certain," he says, "that that is most genuine which is most ancient, and that most ancient which is even from the beginning; in like manner it will be also certain, that that has been delivered by the Apostles which has been held inviolate in the Churches of the Apostles,"—meaning, evidently, the Churches formed by the Apostles. "It may be depended upon," he says again, "that the Gospels were written by the persons whose names they bear. The Apostles have truly preached and written the doctrine they received from Christ. The apostolical men have also faithfully published in writing what they received from the Apostles. All the Gospels are therefore supported by the authority of Apostles, yea, of Jesus Christ." Again, Tertullian says: "Well, if you be willing to exercise your curiosity profitably in the business of your salvation, visit the apostolical Churches, in which the very chairs of the Apostles still preside; in which their very authentic letters are recited, sounding forth the voice, and representing the countenance, of each one of them. Is Achaia near you? You have Corinth. If you are not far from Macedonia, you have Philippi, you have Thessalonica. If you can go to Asia, you have Ephesus. But if you are near to Italy, you have Rome, from whence we also may be easily satisfied."

History ap-  
pealed to by  
Tertullian.



These passages are cited at present merely to illustrate the term "tradition" as used by Origen, and thus to show the ground on which the churches accepted the Gospels, namely, the uninterrupted historic evidence they had, that they had been published in the beginning by Apostles and "apostolical men."

This principle was practically acknowledged by the Council of Nice, or Nicaea, which assembled in A. D. 325. This is the first council that claims to be considered General or Ecumenical. It was convened by the Emperor Constantine to determine the great questions about the person of our Lord, which were raised by the Arian controversy. With the character of Constantine we have nothing to do at present. Our one concern is with the history of the four Gospels. Nicaea was a great commercial city in Bithynia, on the Sea of Marmora, and was thus accessible by sea from all countries bordering on the Mediterranean. In obedience to the imperial edict, bishops came from all parts of Christendom, to the number of 318, besides a multitude of priests, deacons, and other functionaries of the Church. In this Council there were three parties—the orthodox, the Arians, and the Eusebians (so called after Eusebius, the Bishop of Nicomedia), who endeavored to hold an intermediate place between the other two. The Council did not deem it necessary to define the standard of truth, or to say what books were authoritative and what were not, because on these points there was no difference of opinion. History had already determined the matter. The Churches from which these bishops, presbyters, and deacons had come, had for a long time, on the ground of historic evidence transmitted from age to age, accepted the four Gospels as of apostolic origin and invested with apostolic sanction. And the discussions of the Council simply reveal the *fact* that the Gospels which are now in our hands were regarded as genuine, and none but these, by all parties, orthodox and Arian. Arius himself had written a letter to the Emperor, with a copy of his creed, in which he said: "This is the faith which we have received from the Holy Gospels, according to the Lord's words, as the Catholic Church

The Council  
of Nice,  
A. D. 325.

History ac-  
knowledgeed.

and the Scriptures teach." And his followers repeated the assertion of their master. Now the term "Holy Gospels," used by them, conveyed as definite a reference to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, in the beginning of the fourth century, as we shall see, as it would in the nineteenth.

The fact of the universal acknowledgment of our four Gospels by these representatives of the universal Christian Church, is conclusive evidence, not only that they were in existence at that period,

Conclusion. but that they had been in existence for a very long period before. The recent composition and publication of them

is irreconcilable with the fact of their widespread diffusion among the Christian Churches, and their unquestioned acceptance by all the Churches as of apostolic origin. But I am anticipating my argument. What I wish to remark now, and that with all possible emphasis, is that our faith in the genuineness of the four Gospels does not rest on the authority of Councils, any more than it rests on such tales as were invented by the superstition of the ninth century. We fall back, not with regret but with satisfaction, on the ordinary laws and processes of historical evidence, and are more than content that the genuineness of our Gospels should be determined, even as we determine the genuineness of the Orations and Disputations of Cicero, or that of Cæsar's Commentary on the Gallic War.

## PART II.—HOW ANCIENT BOOKS HAVE BEEN PRESERVED AND ARE AUTHENTICATED.

THE question of the genuineness and authenticity of the Gospels is then primarily a literary question, although its determination involves issues which have a far higher than literary interest. As a literary question it is only one of many, or but a part of a larger and more general question. On what grounds do we accept any ancient books as genuine and authentic? We have in our hands books which bear the names of Herodotus, Plato, Aristotle, Xenophon, Livy, Cicero, Cæsar,

A common  
literary  
question.

Virgil, Horace, and a multitude besides. The first of these writers is said to have been born 484 B. C., the second about fifty years later; the two last, the poets Virgil and Horace, are said to have been born, the one 70 B. C., and the other 65 B. C. On what grounds do we accept the writings which bear the names of these men of the old world? There is a gulf of nearly 2000 years between us and the latest of them. The art of printing was invented, or at least first practiced in Europe, in the middle of the fifteenth century; and the oldest printed book of which we have a copy in the British Museum, the beautiful Latin Bible known as Cardinal Mazarine's, appeared at Mentz scarcely before A. D. 1455. Older books, or rather copies of books, are known to us only in manuscript. And, with few exceptions, the existing manuscript copies of the classic authors belong to periods between the tenth and fifteenth centuries of the Christian era. The oldest known manuscript of Herodotus, *e. g.*—of whose history only fifteen manuscript copies are known to exist—is attributed to the tenth century; there being thus about 1500 years between the time of the historian and the date of the oldest copy of his history which has yet been discovered. Homer is supposed to have lived eight centuries before Christ, and we have no complete copy of his two great poems earlier than the thirteenth century after Christ. How can we know, in these circumstances, that these books are genuine and not forgeries? In no instance have we the autograph of the author; in no instance have we what might be called a first edition, or a transcript of the first edition. And if this creates a difficulty in the way of our acceptance of the four Gospels as genuine, it is a difficulty, it will be observed, which is common to all books which have come down from the ages before Christ and from several ages after.

The art of  
printing.

No surviving  
autographs  
of ancient  
books.

The difficulty is less, however, as it respects the four Gospels and the New Testament, than in the case of any other ancient books. While the life of Herodotus is separated by fifteen hundred years from the oldest copy of his writings which we possess, the life of the latest of the Apostles is separated by less than three

hundred years from the oldest copy of his and the other Gospels which we possess. The Ancient MSS. of New Testament. **SINAITIC** manuscript of the New Testament which Dr. Tischendorf discovered in the convent of St. Catherine, on Mount Sinai, in 1859, belongs to the fourth century. The **VATICAN** manuscript of the whole Greek Bible, as far as Hebrews 9 : 14, is believed to belong to the same century. Of this manuscript Dr. Scrivener writes: "Tregelles, a consummate and experienced authority in such matters, was so deeply impressed with the general appearance of Codex B, as being far more venerable than anything else he had ever seen, that he once told me, what I do not observe that he ever published, that while he felt quite sure that it was already written at the time of the Council of Nice (A. D. 325), he did not like to say how much earlier it might well be." The **ALEXANDRIAN**, which contains the entire Bible in Greek, with some accidental *lacunæ*, or omissions, is believed to belong to the first half of the fifth century.\* As to the antiquity of manuscript authority, the Greek New Testament thus stands almost alone.

The number of New Testament MSS. It is equally pre-eminent in the *number* of ancient manuscripts in which it has come down to us. In addition to those already mentioned, "not a few," says Dr. Scrivener, "must be assigned to the fifth and sixth centuries, after which their number increased so prodigiously down to the epoch of the invention of printing, and a little beyond it, that those known at present to exist in public and private libraries throughout Christendom can hardly be less than from eighteen hundred to two thousand. With regard to manuscripts more recent than the tenth century, it may truly be said that the more they are sought for, the more come to light. The accumulated stores buried in the monasteries of Mount Athos, though they have been largely drawn upon in modern times, even after the sweeping raid made by that ardent collector, the late Lord de la Zouche, better known as the Hon.

\* For an account of the principal Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, see Dr. Scrivener's "Six Lectures on the Text of the New Testament," Lectures ii. and iii. (1874).

Robert Curzon, are no doubt very far from exhausted. I have been recently informed, on excellent authority, that in Roumania the houses of the noble families whose ancestors fled from Constantinople before the last agony of the imperial city [when taken by the Turks] are full of works, both Biblical and theological, which they brought with them to the land of their exile. From quite a different part of the Greek peninsula, from Janina in Epirus, the Baroness Burdett-Coutts has just imported a collection of Greek volumes dating from the ninth to the seventeenth century, whereof between thirty and forty, being a third part of the whole, relate to the New Testament. Their soiled and mutilated condition tells too plainly their recent history, as being poor relics snatched from the sack of some Christian convent during the troubles which closed Ali Pasha's rule (A. D. 1622)." \* Recently discovered MSS.

The prospect of further discoveries of ancient manuscripts is far from visionary. It was only in 1859 that what is, perhaps, the oldest known manuscript of the New Testament was discovered. And in 1875 a discovery was made which enables us for the first time to complete the oldest Christian work *after* the apostolic writings—a work as old, perhaps, if not older, than the Gospel by St John—the Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, and to determine the proper character of the homily which has been called the Second Epistle of Clement. These writings, usually called the "Epistles" of St. Clement, were first printed and published about two and a half centuries ago, from the Alexandrian MS. now in the British Museum. But this manuscript is mutilated; the first epistle wants a leaf near the end, while the remaining portion occupies nine leaves; the second ends abruptly in the middle. There has now been found a Greek manuscript in the "library of the Most Holy Sepulchre in Fanar of Constantinople," which contains the complete text of both. And almost simultaneously with this discovery, the University of Cambridge has procured by purchase a manuscript containing the two New MSS. of Clement of Rome.

\* Dr. Scrivener's "Six Lectures," &c., p. 12. As to the means of determining the age of a manuscript, see Lecture i.; also Isaac Taylor's "Transmission of Ancient Books," &c., ch. ii.

Epistles whole in a Syriac version. This manuscript contains the four Gospels, the Acts, the Catholic Epistles, and the Epistles of Paul. It professes to have "received its end and completion in the year one thousand four hundred and eighty-one *of the Greeks*, in the little convent of Mar Saliba, which is in the abode of the monks on the Holy Mountain of the Blessed City of Edessa." The year 1481 of the era "of the Greeks," or the Seleucidæ, corresponds to A. D. 1170.\*

The monastic system was, to our thinking, a misguided form of Christian life. But we owe to it the preservation of the literature of the ancient world, both Christian and classic, during the thousand years and more which separated the Council of Nice from the dayspring of the Reformation. "During the long period of fourteen hundred years (from Christ to the invention of printing), through the fading light of the decline of ancient literature, through the deep gloom of the middle ages, even till the dawn of better days had almost brightened into the morning sunshine of the revival of learning, Holy Scripture was preserved, and its study kept alive, in the same way as were the classical writings of Greece and Rome, by means of manuscript copies made from time to time as occasion required, sometimes by private students, more often by professional scribes called *caligraphers*, or fairhand writers, who were chiefly, though by no means exclusively, members of the religious order, priests or monks, carrying on their honorable and most useful occupation in the *scriptorium*, or writing-chamber of their convents."

"From the third or fourth century downwards," says Mr. Isaac Taylor, "the religious houses were the chief sources of books, and the monks were almost the only copyists. The employment was better suited than any other that can be imagined to the rules and usages, and to the modes of feeling, peculiar to the monastic life. In many monasteries this employment formed the chief occupation of the inmates; and by few was it altogether neglected."

\* For an account of these discoveries, see "St. Clement of Rome. An Appendix." By Cañon (now Bishop) Lightfoot.



Not during these ages alone, however, was the copying of books an honorable and useful occupation. “From the earliest times in which literature flourished, there were in all the cities of Greece and its colonies great numbers of professional scribes; that is to say, persons who gained their subsistence by copying books. Laborers of this class, it may well be supposed, aimed in general at nothing but to gain custom by the fairness and fidelity of their copies. But it appears to have been not uncommon for persons of rank and leisure to occupy themselves in this employment. Thus it is that in the list of copyists we find the names of the nobles of the Constantinopolitan empire. Some created their libraries for themselves, by transcribing every book that came in their way. To persons of a sedate temper, or who by indisposition were confined to their homes, this occupation may be imagined to have been highly agreeable. Nor was it a wasted labor to those who had leisure at command, since the high price of books made the collection of a library by purchase scarcely practicable, except to the most opulent. The influence of Christianity very greatly extended the practice of private copying; for motives of piety operated to stimulate the industry of very many in the good work of multiplying the sacred books, and the works of Christian writers. The highest dignitaries of the Church, and princes even, thought themselves well employed in transcribing the Gospels and Epistles, the Psalter, or the homilies and meditations of the Fathers; nor were the classic authors entirely neglected by these gratuitous copyists.”

It will now be seen that the transmission of ancient books, from the date of their origin until the invention of printing, is easily accounted for. And, so far as our Gospels and the other Christian Scriptures are concerned, it will likewise be seen that they suffer no disadvantage in comparison with other books. On the contrary, we have copies of the Scriptures which carry us much nearer to the date of their origin, than do our copies of other ancient works. And we have an immensely larger number of manuscript copies of the Scriptures than we have of other books. Now if, in the case of a classic

Ancient  
copyists.

Preservation  
of ancient  
books  
accounted  
for.

author, we accept twenty manuscripts, or even five, sometimes only one or two, as sufficient to sustain its genuineness, how much more should we accept the many hundreds of copies in which the Gospels have come down from very remote times!

But at this point a fresh difficulty arises. Be it that we can trace the Gospels through manuscript copies to the fourth century, probably to the beginning of that century, we are still removed by at least two centuries and a half from the date\* of their origin—on the supposition, that is, that the Gospel by Matthew was written shortly after the middle of the first century, and the Gospel by John shortly before the close of the century. We shall find in the Diocletian persecution a probable reason, in addition to the ordinary destructiveness of time, to account for the non-survival of earlier

An interval  
without  
MSS.

manuscripts. But, meantime, how shall we bridge over this long interval of two and a half centuries, and connect the manuscripts of the fourth century with the autographs, now lost, of the later part of the first century? Here, again, it is desirable to point out that whatever difficulty this interval, without manuscripts, involves, it is a difficulty common to the classic authors as well; and it is much greater in their case than in the case of the Christian Gospels. With regard to the latter, the interval can be bridged over most satisfactorily; and the main object of this work is to show how. It will be found that during the period which precedes our most ancient manuscripts, there were writers who quoted from the Gospels, who referred to them directly and indirectly, and some of whom described them. It will be found, likewise, that during this period the Gospels were translated into at least two languages, in countries widely apart from each other, and that these translations exist to this day, witnesses to the existence of the Gospels at a period long anterior to the date of the oldest existing manuscript of the Gospels. But of this, and of much more, the force will be seen only when we have explained the facts and details on which we rely.

\* The Council of Nice (A. D. 325), at which date the Vatican MS., or the Sinaitic, may have been in existence.



## CHAPTER SECOND.

### THE DIOCLETIAN PERSECUTION, AND ITS RELATION TO THE CHRISTIAN BOOKS.

WE begin our travels upwards in search of the "fountain" of the four Gospels, at a period about which no question can be raised. The third year of the fourth century witnessed events which are well known, but the full bearing of which is A. D. 303. not commonly understood or appreciated. The scene of these events was that Bithynia, of Asia Minor, into which Paul would have carried the gospel when on his way from Iconium to Troas, but into which "the Spirit suffered him not" to go, in order that he might hasten on towards the great civilized world beyond the Aegean and the Sea of Marmora, in which the apostolic voice had not yet been heard. (Acts 16 : 7.) This was about A. D. 50. Ten years later there were Christians in this province, as in neighboring provinces, to whom the Apostle Peter addressed his "First Epistle." Less than fifty years after that "Epistle" was written, the Christians in Bithynia were so numerous, and their number was increasing so rapidly, that the Roman governor was in perplexity to know how to deal with them. To tolerate them was impossible, and to extirpate them, if possible, would have been barbarous and cruel. And yet measures towards extirpation must be taken, and were taken. The governor was Pliny, called Pliny the  
Younger. the Younger, but not now a young man. Born in A. D. 61 or 62, in A. D. 79 he witnessed, and afterwards described, the terrible eruption of Vesuvius which destroyed Pompeii and Herculaneum. He was a man of letters, a student of eloquence and poetry, a patron of schools and libraries, and withal he had the reputation of being kind and benevolent. About A. D. 107 (Neander says A. D. 110) he was appointed to the governorship of Bithynia,

and, in the embarrassment in which he found himself at once, he wrote to his master, Trajan, for instructions. There was no law to guide him except the old law relating to "*Religiones novæ et peregrinæ*," but the number of the Christians was so great that he knew not how to put it in force. "For many," he writes to the Emperor, "of all ages, of all ranks, and of both sexes, would be involved in the danger; for the contagion of this superstition has seized not only cities, but also villages and the open country." (For the whole letter and Trajan's reply, see Lardner's *Credibility*, vol. vii.) The temples were deserted, the ordinary rites of worship could not for a long time be celebrated, and victims for sacrifice were rarely purchased. What should he do? Meantime he asked such as were accused before him, whether they were Christians. On their confessing that they were, he repeated the question a second and a third time, under threat of the punishment of death. "Such as still persisted," he says, "I ordered away to be punished [*i. e.*, with death]; for it was no doubt with me, whatever might be the nature of their opinion, that contumacy and inflexible obstinacy ought to be punished." Following the brutal custom of Roman justice, he examined *by torture* two maidservants (*ancillæ*) who were deaconesses (*ministræ*) in the Christian community, but he could extort nothing from them but what he had already ascertained from others. And it amounted to this—that the Christians were in the habit of

meeting together on a fixed or appointed day (*stato die*);  
Christian  
worship. that they then united in a hymn of praise to Christ, as God; that they bound one another, not to the commission of crimes, but to refrain from theft and from adultery; to be faithful in performing their promises, and to withhold from none the property entrusted to their keeping; that after this they separated, and met again in the evening at a simple and innocent meal. Trajan's reply to Pliny amounted to this—that persons supposed to be Christians were not to be sought for; but if they were accused, and the charge proved, they were to be punished: if, however, a man denied the charge, and could prove its falsity by offering his prayers to the gods, however suspected he might have been, he should be excused in respect of his repentance.

The events with which we have specially to do, nearly two centuries after the days of Trajan and Pliny, show <sup>200 years after Pliny.</sup> that the might and wisdom of Roman rulers had utterly failed to root the Christian faith out of Bithynia. Diocletian was on the throne, and had been for some twenty years. He was <sup>Diocletian.</sup> one of the wisest of the Emperors, and one of the most successful. "He found the empire weak and shattered, threatened with immediate dissolution, from intestine discord and external violence. He left it strong and compact, at peace within, and triumphant abroad, stretching from the Tigris to the Nile, from the shores of Holland to the Euxine." But there was one power at work within the Empire, which even Diocletian did not know how to regulate or control. His own heart and judgment would probably have led him to leave it to work as it might. But his son-in-law, Galerius, already a Cæsar, afterwards Augustus, was full of zeal for the gods, whose existence was threatened by the progress of Christianity. About the year 295 he issued an order <sup>Galerius, A. D. 295.</sup> requiring every soldier to join in the sacrificial rites. Many Christians gave in their commissions, and soldiers of all ranks from the highest to the lowest, quitted the service, that they might remain steadfast in their faith. A few were sentenced to death; ostensibly not so much on the ground of their faith, as because of the language in which they expressed their indignation—language which was easily construed into treason.

Beyond this form of persecution Diocletian could not be persuaded for several years to go. But the pagans of the old school formed a close alliance with the skeptical philosophers, and both perceived that the time was now come for a desperate struggle with their common foe. They found a fit instrument in Galerius, a man of haughty and ungovernable temper, who was stimulated by his own passions, and by the fanaticism of his mother, a woman notorious for her devotion to some of the wildest and most revolting rites of Eastern superstition. Diocletian spent the winter of 302-3 in his palace at Nicomedia, in Bithynia. Though only fifty-eight or fifty-nine years of age, he was feeble both in mind and body,

and, unable to resist the importunity of Galerius and the zealous pagans who surrounded him, he gave his consent to edicts which for years deluged the world with Christian blood.

The twenty-third of February, one of the great pagan festivals, the feast-day of the god Terminus, was selected for the first onslaught. At the first dawn of day, the magnificent church of Nicomedia was broken open, the copies of the Holy Scriptures were burnt, and the whole church abandoned to plunder and destruction. The next day a decree of proscription was published in Nicomedia, and from thence was speedily spread throughout the empire. It enacted that the churches should be demolished to the foundation; *that the Scriptures should be burned*; that they who enjoyed any honors should lose them; and that men of private condition should be deprived of their liberty, if they persisted in the profession of

The  
Diocletian  
edicts.

Christianity. Other decrees followed. And it seemed for a time as if the gates of hell had been opened to send forth their hosts against the Christian Church. But it would take us too far away from the point which we wish to illustrate, if we entered on the story of the sufferings and martyrdoms which followed.

Assault on  
the Christian  
Scriptures.

That which distinguishes the Diocletian persecution from others, is not so much its severity, as the deliberate and persistent assault which it made upon the Christian Scriptures. The Diocletian decree, says De Pressensé, "bears clearly the impress of the pagan philosophers; neither Diocletian nor Galerius would have themselves thought of proscribing the sacred Scriptures; this was a cowardly vengeance of impotent men of letters, anxious to destroy the Divine book by which they were confounded." This is true, but it is only part of the truth. There was far more in the effort to destroy the Christian books than the jealousy and rivalry of pagan authors. "It is quite evident," as Neander well puts it, "that the

"The Martyrs  
and Apolo-  
gists," p. 220.

Neander's  
History,  
i. 203.

plan now was to extirpate Christianity from the root. There was something novel in the undertaking to deprive the Christians of their religious writings. It differed

from the mode of proceeding in the former persecutions, when it was hoped to suppress the sect by removing away their teachers and guides. The importance of these documents, as a means of preserving and propagating the Christian faith, must now have been understood. And there could be no doubt that the destruction of every copy of the Bible, had such a thing been possible, would have proved more effectual than the removal of those living witnesses of the faith, whose example served only to call forth a still greater number to supply their place. On the other hand, could the plan have been carried out, to destroy every existing copy of the Scriptures, the *very source* would have been cut off from which true Christianity and the life of the Church was ever freshly springing with unconquerable vigor. Let preachers of the Gospel, bishops, and clergy be executed; it was all to no purpose, so long as this book, by which new teachers could always be formed, remained in the hands of the Christians. The transmission of Christianity was not in itself, it is true, inseparably and necessarily connected with the letter of the Scriptures. Written, not on tablets of stone, but on the living tablets of the heart, the Divine doctrine, once lodged in the human soul, could preserve and propagate itself through its own Divine power. But exposed to those manifold sources of corruption in human nature, Christianity, without the well-spring of Scripture from which it could ever be restored back to its purity, would as all history teaches, have been soon overwhelmed, and have become no longer recognizable, under the load of falsehoods and corruption."

The words of Milton (in his "Areopagitica"), respecting books in general, have peculiar truth and force when applied to Holy Scripture: "Books do contain a progeny of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve, as in a vial, the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. . . . Unless wariness be used, as good almost kill a man as kill a good book: who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were, in the eye. . . . It is true, no age can restore a life, whereof,

Milton on  
"books."

perhaps, there is no great loss; and revolutions of ages do not often recover the loss of a rejected truth, for the want of which whole nations fare the worse. We should be wary, therefore, . . . how we spill that seasoned life of man, preserved and stored up in books; since we see a kind of homicide may be thus committed, sometimes a martyrdom; and if it extend to the whole impression, a kind of massacre, whereof the execution ends not in the slaying of an elemental life, but strikes at the ethereal and fifth essence, the breath of reason itself; slays an immortality rather than a life." All this was understood long before Milton wrote his memorable words. The man who devised and inspired the Diocletian persecution, saw clearly that Christianity was not to be destroyed by the destruction of its professors. So long as the life of their life lived in their holy books, their faith would be reproduced in successive generations of believing men. Root as well as branch must now be destroyed, if possible. And the attempt to effect this great but diabolic consummation, is profoundly significant in relation to our present subject.

FIRST.—We are entitled to say that in the end of the third century, two hundred years after the death of the last surviving Apostle, there existed a recognized body of Christian writings, which were known to both Christians and their persecutors, which were publicly read in the Christian assemblies, and guarded with most devoted care; and which, as Canon Westcott says, were formed into a collection so well known that they could be described by a title scarcely less explicit than that by which it was afterwards called—The Bible—τὰ βιβλία.

SECONDLY.—We have indubitable evidence that the four Gospels which bear the names of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, formed part of this collection which the Christians called "Sacred" and "Divine." Eusebius, who was afterwards Bishop of Cæsarea, and who wrote the history of the Church to the twentieth year of the reign of Constantine, was about forty years old when the Diocletian persecution burst upon the Christian Churches, and tells us that he saw with his own eyes the

A "body" of  
Christian  
writings  
before A. D.  
303.

The Four  
Gospels in  
this collec-  
tion.



houses of prayer thrown down and razed to the foundations, and "the inspired and sacred Scriptures consigned to the fire in the open market-place." He survived the storm, and afterwards received a commission from Constantine to prepare fifty copies of the Divine Scriptures, written on prepared skins, by the help of skillful artists, accurately acquainted with their craft, to be used in the churches of his new capital. Everything was done to give importance to the commission. And Eusebius remarks, with evident satisfaction, that if the predecessors of Constantine commanded the sacred oracles to be consumed in the flames, Constantine gave orders that they should be multiplied, and embellished magnificently, at the expense of the royal treasury. Now, among the books held by all Christians to be "Divine," of which copies were thus prepared for the churches of Constantinople, we find our four Gospels. In book iii. of his History, chapter xxiii., Eusebius gives us a "narrative respecting the Apostle John." Eusebius. In chap. xxxiv., which is headed, "The order of the Gospels," he says, "Let us now show the undisputed writings of the same Apostle. And of those, his Gospel, so well known in the Churches throughout the world, must first of all be acknowledged as genuine. That it is, however, with good reason, placed the fourth in order by the ancients, may be made evident in the following manner. . . . Matthew, having first proclaimed the Gospel in Hebrew, when on the point of going also to other nations, committed it to writing in his native tongue, and thus supplied the want of his presence to them by his writings. After Mark and Luke had already published their Gospels, they say that John, who during all this time was proclaiming the Gospel without writing, at length proceeded to write it on the following occasion." He then describes how John wrote the account of the time not recorded by the former Evangelists, and the deeds done by the Saviour which they have passed by.

A better witness than Eusebius there could not be. He survived the storm of the Diocletian persecution, lived to see Christianity visibly triumphant, and its representatives from all parts of the world assembling under Imperial patronage at Nicæa, in the same

Bithynia in which the blow was struck which its enemies hoped might be its death-blow. We do not concern ourselves with his opinions. Nor need we receive his explanations of the circumstances in which John and others wrote their Gospels as complete, or in all respects accurate. We cite him only as a witness to the fact that the four Gospels were in his time "well known in the Churches throughout the world," and "acknowledged as genuine;" that is, as being the writings of the Apostles and apostolic men whose names they bear; and that besides these four there were none others so received. Eusebius is not to be regarded as a simple witness, but *as giving to us the witness of the age to which he belonged*, the end of the third and the beginning of the fourth century.

THIRDLY.—The great importance attached to "THE BOOKS," τὰ βιβλία, in the Diocletian persecution, is seen, not only in the fact that their destruction was the special aim of that persecution, and in the fact that many submitted willingly to the utmost sufferings which the Roman governors could inflict, rather than surrender what they deemed their chiefest treasure, but likewise in the controversies and divisions which were caused by the unfaithfulness of others. Those who yielded to the fear of torture, and gave up their copies of "THE BOOKS," were called *traditores*—a word meaning literally *givers up*, from which we receive our *traitor*—and were excluded from the fellowship of the Church. There were others who tried to save both their lives and their consciences by giving up books which were not sacred, and allowing the officers of government to receive the impression that they were submitting to the Imperial decree. There were merciful magistrates who encouraged the Christians to act this part. But those who submitted to the semblance of guilt, in order to avoid the trials of persecution, were branded as *traditores* equally with those who, to save their lives, gave up the true Scriptures. Long after the persecution was at an end, and when Constantine sat on the Imperial throne, the election of Cæcilian, as Bishop of Carthage, was resolutely opposed, on the one ground, that he had

The dishonor of  
*Traditores*.



been ordained by Felix, a *traditor*. This opposition was headed by Donatus, a Numidian bishop; and the division which followed, bearing his name as the "Donatist schism," was not healed for many years. In this "schism," and the circumstances which led to it, we have the strongest evidence of the importance which was attached to the "sacred" writings by the Churches of that age.

Occasion  
of the  
Donatist  
schism.

In some respects the history and argument of this chapter may seem superfluous; for the existence of our four Gospels in the end of the third century, and their acceptance as the only apostolic history of Jesus Christ by all Christian Churches at that time, are admitted by the most hostile critics. But in order to give a due impression of the argumentative importance of this admitted fact, we must know the grounds on which the admission rests. And these can be fully known only through the history of the times.

[For a sketch of the writers of this period, and the character of their testimony, consult the list of witnesses given in the Introduction.]

## CHAPTER THIRD.

### FROM THE END TO THE BEGINNING OF THE THIRD CENTURY.

WE shall now trace the historic stream upwards. Fifty years before the Diocletian persecution (A. D. 253), there died a man who knew the beliefs of the earlier part of the third century as well as Eusebius knew those of its end. "Among all the Fathers of the first three centuries," says Canon Westcott, "Origen, the Adamantine, stands out with the noblest individuality. Unsurpassed in Christian zeal, unrivalled in universal learning, he devoted a long life to the study of the Scriptures. He believed that the Bible contained all the treasures of wisdom, and so he often appears to see mysteries in it which the critic refuses to recognize. He believed that Christianity contained the answer to every human instinct, and so often presses with unchastened boldness to offer an explanation in its name for that which must as yet be hidden from men. His faults, as of every great man, were themselves great, but his genius is yet powerful to warm and to enlighten. No canonization has hallowed his name, but none the less his influence on after ages has been equal to that of the greatest saints—Augustine, Athanasius, and Jerome."

Origen, A. D.  
184-253.

This Origen writes respecting the four Gospels, thus: "As I have understood by tradition, respecting the four Gospels, which are *the only undisputed ones in the whole Church of God throughout the world*. The first is written according to Matthew, the same that was once a publican, but afterwards an Apostle of Jesus Christ, who having published it for the Jewish converts, wrote it in the Hebrew. The second is according to Mark, who composed it as Peter explained to him, whom he also acknowledges as his son in his general Epistle, saying, 'The elect church in Babylon salutes you, as also Mark my son.' And the third according to Luke, the Gospel commended by Paul, which was written for the converts from the Gentiles. And last of all the Gospel by John." On all

these Gospels Origen wrote commentaries. The Gospel by John—"the John," as he says, "who reclined on the breast of Jesus"—was his especial delight. "He rejoiced to trace St. John in his calm and royal flight into the sublimities of Christian metaphysics; he would fain follow him, who has been so well called the Eagle of the Gospel, in his soarings towards the Sun of the moral world."

The value of the testimony of Origen does not depend on the greatness and goodness of the man himself, nor is it lessened in anywise by aught that may be urged against his system of allegorical interpretation. What we have said of Eusebius is true of him, that he is not to be regarded as a single witness. He gives us the testimony of thousands of witnesses, and not of individual witnesses merely, but of Churches throughout the world, which in the middle of the third century accepted the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, as the writings of these men, and therefore as authentic records of the life of Jesus Christ.

Origen had a right which perhaps few, if any other men, ever possessed, to speak in the name of "the whole Church of God throughout the world." He visited personally al- <sup>Origen</sup> <sup>a traveller.</sup> most all parts of the then Christendom, became acquainted with their bishops and presbyters, taught in many of their churches, took part in their controversies, wrote in defence of their common faith, and at last died in prison, the martyr of Jesus. Born in Alexandria, and educated in what was certainly the most literary, perhaps the most influential, Church in the world, he was introduced to the knowledge of the Gospel by his father. Under his father's tuition he committed a portion of the Gospel to memory every day. When that father was thrown into prison for his faith, the son's deepest concern was that he should be steadfast and immovable in his fidelity. He sent to him a most encouraging letter on martyrdom, and addressed to him these heroic words, "My father, flinch not because of us." And Leonides, the father, was faithful unto death.

The personal history of Origen, full of deep and tragic interest as it is, does not belong to our argument. Enough may be given to

indicate the opportunities he had of acquaintance with the chief Churches of his age. When the death of Septimius Severus brought rest to the suffering Church, Origen undertook the first of his great journeys. (Severus died Feb. 4, A. D. 211.) The Church of Rome had a special interest for him on account both of its position and its history. It was at that time the oldest of the great Churches of the west. The most eminent and the most dangerous heretics had all visited it. Rome was also the capital of the world, the imperial city, the western Babylon. But Origen does not seem to have made a long sojourn there. On his return to Alexandria he resumed the work of teaching. And his fame spread far and wide. A Roman soldier, from the depths of Arabia, arrived one day at Alexandria with a strange message. His general had sent him to ask the Bishop Demetrius and the Governor of Egypt to send Origen to him that he might confer with him on the Christian doctrine. Origen set out at once on the long journey across the desert, "assuredly gathering," like Paul, that the Lord had sent for him. Some years later he was sent for to Antioch by Mammœa, the mother of Alexander Severus, who desired to know the Christian religion.

The better to prepare himself for the interpretation of the sacred Scriptures, Origen gave himself to the study of the Hebrew tongue, and while prosecuting his studies, formed a friendship which was of great service to him. Ambrose, a rich inhabitant of Alexandria, was reclaimed from Gnosticism by the instructions of Origen, and placed his whole fortune at a service which in his view found its mightiest advocate in the learned doctor of Alexandria. Origen, who was not only unselfish, but held ascetic views on the subject of poverty as a Christian grace, would not accept one coin for himself, but found in his friend's wealth the means of putting his thoughts into circulation. Ambrose gave to Origen seven secretaries, who took it in turn to write without pause or interruption from his dictation; and besides these he had in his employ a number of copyists. He himself was the most zealous fellow-worker with his illustrious master. All this was done from "love to the sacred Scriptures." "We never cease comparing texts," Origen wrote: "we discuss them during meals,

Origen's  
scriptural  
studies.

and after meals allow ourselves no time for walking or rest; we return at once to our studies, and diligently correct the manuscripts."

When the Emperor Caracalla (died April 8, A. D. 217) was filling the city of Alexandria with terror and blood, Origen made a journey into Asia Minor, and in passing through Palestine he was invited at Cæsarea to take part in the public worship, although he was neither a bishop nor a presbyter. At Ephesus he had a conference with a Gnostic heretic. In Achaia he held conferences with the false teachers who were troubling the Churches of that country. He made a long sojourn at Athens. He returned to Alexandria by way of Ephesus, where he encountered fresh heretics, and "wherever he went," as De Pressensé remarks, "he left the luminous traces of his great genius." His influence in the Eastern Church was such that he was sent for from all quarters to defend the faith against the encroachments of error. When wronged and persecuted by the jealousy of the Bishop of Alexandria, he left his native city to visit, and see with his own eyes, those towns and villages of Galilee where the divine words were spoken which were the subject of his commentaries. He delivered several of his homilies at Jerusalem before Bishop Alexander.

Origen in  
Jerusalem.

After a brief sojourn in Palestine he settled at Cæsarea, and there recommenced his labors as a teacher. "Once again, wealth, intellectual and moral power, and earnest piety, acknowledged the attraction of his teaching. But quiet studies could not be long pursued in this period of conflict." Fresh persecution drove him from Cæsarea, and now he found a place of refuge in Cappadocia, first with Bishop Firmilianus, then in the house of a rich lady named Juliana, who had inherited the library of Symmachus, the Syrian translator of the Old Testament. The Emperor Maximinus died in A. D. 238, and Origen returned to Cæsarea. We find him soon after at Nicomedia, where he had a conference with a heretic named Bassus. At a later period we find him at Bostra in Arabia, where he was successful in rescuing the Bishop of that city from serious error. During the calm which the Church enjoyed under the rule of Philip the Arabian, Origen wrote his great work "Con-

tra Celsum"—"the masterpiece of ancient apology, for solidity of basis, vigor of argument, and breadth of eloquent exposition." But in the following reign his life and labors came to an end. He was one of the many victims of the terrible persecution which overtook the Church under the Emperor Decius. "The persecutors spent all their fury upon the venerable man, whose body was worn and wasted by asceticism, and by the vast and incessant labors of his life. In Tyre he was not only loaded with chains, but exposed to divers tortures. He was cast into the deepest dungeon, an iron collar was hung about his neck, and his feet were crushed for four days in the stocks. He was constantly reminded of the fiery death which awaited him, but he stood firm under all agonies and threats. His persecutors, however, by a last refinement of cruelty, did not send him to the stake, imagining that they could thus deprive him of the crown of martyrdom. Spent as he was by so much suffering, Origen had still strength to address words of consolation to his brethren. His last thought was for them, and he died as he had lived, as ardent for the cross of Christ under his crown of hoary hairs, as he had been in his early youth."

Death of  
Origen.

It is only in the light of this history that we see the full force of his statement that the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and they only, were accepted by the whole Church of God throughout the world. He might have confirmed his statement by saying, "I speak that which I do know, and testify that I have seen." This almost "universal traveller" within the limits of Christendom, this lifelong student and interpreter of the Gospels, this great disputer with heretics and unbelievers, this martyr for Christ's sake, writes calmly, and in the tone of a man to whom it does not occur that his words would be questioned, and tells us that these four Gospels were universally accepted as the writings respectively of two Apostles and two friends of Apostles. His testimony is that of the universal Church before the middle of the third century, a testimony which bears explicitly on the entire half century (A. D. 202-253) which separated the martyrdom of his father from his own death.



Let us try to get a clear idea of all that is meant by the testimony of Origen to the four Gospels.

First of all, as just indicated, he had personal knowledge of the fact, that throughout his lifetime these Gospels were the unchallenged records, accepted by the Churches everywhere, of the earthly life of the Founder of their faith. His first great journey to visit foreign Churches took place as early as A. D. 211. And not only was he for forty years after, "in journeyings oft," but his fame attracted students and inquirers from all parts of Christendom to Alexandria, so that he had the most perfect means of knowing what he said and whereof he affirmed, when he spake of the four Gospels as "*the only undisputed ones in the whole Church of God, throughout the world.*"

Secondly: Origen speaks of the past as well as of the present, of what he "understood by tradition" as well as what he knew personally. The Gospels which he knew from his own earliest years as then "undisputed," were the Gospels which tradition or history ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Now, let us see what his connections with the past were, and what means we know he possessed of acquaintance with its history. We begin with his father, Leonides, a noble-hearted martyr to the Christian faith. Origen was eighteen years of age at the time of his father's death. He was now the sole support of his mother, but he had courage and devotedness equal to the task. His mind and heart had been carefully trained by his father, by whom "the Gospel" was so valued, that the son was taught to commit a portion of it to memory every day. There can, then, be no room for question that the Gospels which Origen afterwards described as universally accepted were in the hands of Leonides, and that we may add the lifetime of the father to that of the son, as included within the scope of the testimony which the son bears to the position of these Gospels in the Christian Church.

But Origen was connected with the past by other links as well.

He had sat at the feet of the greatest Christian Gamaliel of that age, Clement of Alexandria. Clement had

Clement of  
Alexandria.

travelled far and wide in search of truth, and never paused, to use his own words, till he found it in the bosom of the Word of the eternal Truth. He tells us that he had the opportunity of hearing many eminent representatives of Christianity in Italy, Greece, and Asia, until, after hearing the teaching of Pantænus (of whom more will be said immediately), he fixed his abode in Egypt. Henceforth Alexandria was his home, except when driven thence by persecution. And in this famous city he devoted himself to "the priesthood of teaching." And he felt all the dignity and importance of his office. "Blessed are the peacemakers," we find him saying; "blessed they who by their teaching bring back into the path of peace, to the living Word, travellers who, through ignorance, have gone astray in the midst of life, and who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness." The office of "catechist," in which Clement succeeded Pantænus, and in which Origen succeeded Clement, was, we take it, somewhat like the office of a theological professorship in modern times. About A. D. 190, he, being then a presbyter of the Alexandrian Church, became assistant to his preceptor, Pantænus. In A. D. 202, both principal and

Pantænus  
and Clement,  
A. D. 202.

of the persecution under Severus. In the beginning of the reign of Caracalla he was at Jerusalem; and Alexander, Bishop of Jerusalem, who was at that time a prisoner for the Gospel, recommended him in a letter to the Church at Antioch, representing him as a godly minister, a man both virtuous and well known, whom they had already seen, and who had confirmed and promoted the Church of Christ. It is supposed, but not certainly known, that Pantænus and Clement returned to Alexandria in A. D. 206. In A. D. 211 Clement succeeded Pantænus as Master of the school, and in 220 he died.

Here, then, we have another competent witness to the Scriptures, which were held, not by himself as an individual, but by the universal Church, to have been apostolic. And if no statement of his own had survived, the statement of Origen regarding the Gospels must be accepted as that of Clement as well. The disciple must have known perfectly what the Master taught; and the period,



virtually certified by Origen, during which the four Gospels were “undisputed,” must include the whole lifetime of Clement, *thus carrying us back probably to near the middle of the second century.* But we have Clement’s own testimony as well. Alexandria was in itself, what Canon Westcott calls it, the common meeting-place of the traditions of the East and West. But Clement, as we have seen, had opportunities of seeking out and knowing these traditions at their sources; and, speaking of the Christian teachers whom he had met in Greece and Italy and Palestine, and various parts of the East, he writes: “These men, preserving the true tradition of the blessed teaching directly from Peter and James, from John and Paul, the holy Apostles, son receiving it from father (but few are they who are like their fathers), came by God’s providence even to us, to deposit among us those seeds which were derived from their ancestors and the Apostles.” In another passage he tells us that the gospels which contain the genealogies (Matthew and Luke) were first written; he then states the circumstances in which it was understood that the Gospel of Mark was written; and concludes by saying, “that last of all, John, perceiving that what had reference to the body in the Gospel of our Saviour, was sufficiently detailed, and being encouraged by his familiar friends, and urged by the Spirit, wrote a spiritual Gospel.”

*Alexandria.*

Eusebius,  
book vi.,  
ch. xiv.

The life of Pantænus carries us still farther back. Of the life of the teacher and predecessor of Clement we know little, beyond what has been already mentioned. In early life he studied and accepted various philosophies, and when won to Christ, he devoted himself entirely to his service. It was in A. D. 180 that he founded the “School of the Catechists” in Alexandria. Before this, most probably—although it may possibly have been at a later period—he went into India, or some other region of the far East, to proclaim the Gospel; and found there a Gospel by Matthew, written in Hebrew or Aramaic—which tradition said had been left by St. Bartholomew—and brought it back with him to Alexandria. He wrote commentaries on the Scriptures, of which only a few scattered

*Pantænus.*

Founded the  
School of the  
Catechists.

fragments have survived. His death is believed to have taken place about A. D. 211. If he was thirty years of age—he may have been more—when he began his work in Alexandria, his life connects us with the middle of the second century. And it is not a mere conjecture, but a moral certainty, that what was “undisputed” regarding the Gospels in the days of his successors, Clement and Origen, was equally “undisputed” in his days. Although his own writings have been lost, his faith and his opinions must have been fully known by his illustrious disciple, Clement, who had been in the closest association with him for twenty years.

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TESTIMONY OF WRITERS OF THE FOURTH, AND PART OF  
THE THIRD CENTURIES.

AUGUSTINE, A. D. 395.—After enumerating the books of the Old Testament, he proceeds thus—“Of the New, there are the four books of the Gospel, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, fourteen Epistles of the Apostle Paul to the Romans, two to the Corinthians, to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, two to the Thessalonians, to the Colossians, two to Timothy, to Titus, Philemon, the Hebrews; two Epistles of Peter, three of John, one of Jude, and one of James; the Acts of the Apostles in one book; and the Revelation of John in one book. In these books, they who fear God seek his will.”

ATHANASIUS, A. D. 326.—“The books of the New Testament are these—the four Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. Then after them the Acts of the Apostles, and the seven Epistles of the apostles, called Catholic; of James, one; Peter, two; John, three; Jude, one. Besides these, there are the fourteen Epistles of the Apostle Paul, the order of which is thus: the first to the Romans, then two to the Corinthians, that to the Galatians, the next to the Ephesians, then to the Philippians, to the Colossians, two to the Thessalonians, the Epistle to the Hebrews, two to Timothy, to Titus one, the last to Philemon, and again the Revelation of John. These are the fountains of salvation, that he who thirsts may be satisfied with the oracles contained in them: in these alone

the doctrine of religion is taught: let no man add to them or take any thing from them."

In his writings he quotes all the books.

JEROME, A. D. 322.—He names and describes *all* the writers of the New Testament. "The first are Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, the chariot of the Lord, and the true cherubim, who go wherever the Spirit leads them. The Apostle Paul writes to seven churches; for the eighth, that of the Hebrews, by many is not reckoned among them. He likewise instructs Timothy and Titus, and intercedes with Philemon for a runaway servant. The Acts of the Apostles, another work of Luke the Physician, whose praise is in the Gospel, contain the history of the infancy of the Church. The Apostles James, Peter, John, Jude write seven Epistles, of few words, but full of sense: the Revelation of John has as many mysteries as words." Jerome published a Latin translation of the New Testament containing precisely our books.

EUSEBIUS, A. D. 315.—"It will be proper to enumerate here, in a summary way, the books of the New Testament which have been already mentioned. And in the first place, are to be ranked the sacred four Gospels; then the Acts of the Apostles; after that the Epistles of Paul. In the next place, that, called the first Epistle of John and the [first] Epistle of Peter are to be esteemed authentic. After these is to be placed, if it be thought fit, the Revelation of John, about which we shall observe the different opinions at a proper season. Of the *controverted*, but yet well-known or *approved by the most*, are that called the Epistle of James, and that of Jude, and the second of Peter, and the second and third of John; whether they were written by the evangelist, or another of the same name. Among the *spurious*, are to be placed the Acts of Paul, and the book entitled the Shepherd, and the Revelation of Peter: and besides these that called the Epistle of Barnabas, and the book named the Doctrines of the Apostles. And, moreover, as I said, the Revelation of John, if it seem meet, which some reject, others reckon among the books universally received."

CYPRIAN, A. D. 248.—He mentions the four Gospels by the

names of their authors, comparing them "to the four rivers of Paradise." By them the "Church is watered, and her plants are enabled to bear fruit." Dr. Lardner extracts from him at length quotations from *Acts*, *Rom.* I. and II., *Cor.*, *Gal.*, *Eph.*, *Phil.*, *Col.*, *Thess.*, *Tim.*, *Tit.*—in short,—*all* Paul's Epistles except the Hebrews. He also quotes 1st Peter and 1st John, and the Revelation often. Cyprian has not *one quotation from any apocryphal writer.*

DIONYSIUS OF ALEXANDRIA, A. D. 247.—He wrote a number of works, one, an Epistle to Basilides, is preserved entire. In this he says: "By what you write you show that you well understand the divine evangelists, and that they have not precisely related the hour when the Lord arose; for the evangelists have expressed themselves differently concerning the time when those persons came to the sepulchre; and all of them say that they found the Lord already risen. 'And in the end of the Sabbath,' as Matthew says, 28:1. 'And early, when it was yet dark,' as John 20:1. 'And very early in the morning,' as Luke 24:1. 'And very early in the morning, at the rising of the sun,' as Mark 16:2. But when he arose no one has expressly said, and yet let us not think that the evangelists disagree or contradict each other, although there be some small difference." This passage, as Dr. Lardner has pointed out, is of great value, because it shows there were four authentic historians of the life of Jesus received by Christians in Dionysius's day, and no more, and who those historians were.

ORIGEN, A. D. 230.—He was a voluminous writer, and many portions of his works have come down to our time. There are three catalogues of the New Testament books given by him; the four Gospels are in them, as we have them. Citations from him would form a volume; the important ones have already been given.

JULIUS AFRICANUS, A. D. 220.—He was the author of several treatises, one on the "disagreement supposed to be between the Gospels on the genealogy of Christ." This is preserved by Eusebius, and shows that the Gospels were accepted as Scripture long before the Council of Nice, A. D. 325.

TERTULLIAN, A. D. 200.—Of the Gospels he says: "We lay this down for certain truth, that the evangelic Scriptures have for their authors the Apostles, to whom the work of publishing the Gospel was committed by the Lord himself. Among the Apostles, John and Matthew teach us the faith, among apostolical men, Luke and Mark refresh it." This also is evidence that the Gospels were a part of the Christian Scriptures in his day.

## CHAPTER FOURTH.

### FROM THE END OF THE SECOND CENTURY AND TOWARDS ITS BEGINNING.

WE have now traced the stream upwards from the period of the Diocletian persecution to, or nearly to, the middle of the second century, and have reached an epoch in which we discover fresh and abundant evidence of the universal acceptance of the four Gospels.

Origen, Clement, and Pantænus, though they travelled far, had their home in Alexandria, the Christian capital of Egypt, a city which was famous for its learning and intellectual influence for centuries both before and after the Christian era. We now turn to the West, and find in Southern Gaul a witness whose testimony is of the highest importance. In this witness, Irenæus, Irenæus, A. D. 126-202. we have a connecting link between the East and the West. Born, some think, as early as A. D. 97, but more probably in 126, what is certain of him is, that he spent his youth in Asia Minor, and that, on the death of Pothinus, he became Bishop of the Church in Lyons, in A. D. 177. Distant as these places are from each other, there had long been commercial intercourse between them, and, through the channel of commerce, Christianity found its way to Southern Gaul. "This Gaul owed its knowledge of Christianity to the same country from which in former times it had drawn its civilization: the Christian missionary completed the work of the Phœcean exile." Irenæus was connected with the apostolic age through Polycarp, whom he had seen and heard in his youth, and through Pothinus, whom he succeeded as Bishop in Lyons. And the testimony which he bears to the four Gospels must be read in the light of this fact. His recollections of his youth must be given in his own words. In a letter to Florinus, who had fallen into the errors of the Gnostic heresiarch, Valentinus, he wrote thus:

“Those opinions, the presbyters before us, who also conversed with the Apostles, have not delivered to you. For I saw you when I was very young, in the lower Asia, with Polycarp—for I better remember the affairs of that time than those which have lately happened; the things which we learn in our childhood growing up with the soul, and uniting themselves to it. Insomuch, that I can tell the place in which the blessed Polycarp sat and taught, and his going out and coming in, and the manner of his life, and the form of his person, and the discourses he made to the people; and how he related his conversation with John and others who had seen the Lord; and how he related their sayings, and what he had heard from them concerning the Lord; concerning both His miracles and doctrine, as he had received them from the eye-witnesses of the Word of Life; all which Polycarp related agreeably to the Scriptures. These things I then, through the mercy of God toward me, diligently heard and attended to, recording them not on paper, but upon my heart. And through the grace of God I continually renew the remembrance of them. And I can affirm, in the presence of God, that if this blessed and apostolical presbyter had heard any such thing [*i.e.*, as the opinion now held by Florinus], he would have cried out and stopped his ears, and, according to his custom, would have said, ‘Good Lord, to what times hast Thou reserved me that I should hear such things!’ and he would have fled from the place in which he was sitting or standing, when he heard such words. And as much may be perceived from his Epistles, which he sent to neighboring Churches, establishing them; or to some of the brethren, instructing and admonishing them.”

Letter to  
Florinus.

Analyzing this narrative, these important points appear: (1) Irenæus was connected with the Apostle John, and others who had seen the Lord, by the venerable martyr Polycarp. (2) Of this martyr Polycarp, his person, and his recitals of what John and others reported respecting “the miracles and doctrine of the Lord,” Irenæus had a very distinct remembrance, much cherished and often renewed. (3) What Polycarp related concerning Christ was “agreeable to the Scriptures,”

Analysis of  
letter of  
Irenæus.



which must mean agreeable to the Gospels, because it is only with these that Polycarp's recollections of the Apostle John's conversations could be compared. (4) Irenæus's recollections of Polycarp's teaching were corroborated by letters then extant, which Polycarp had addressed to Churches and to individuals.

Pothinus,  
predecessor  
of Irenæus,  
born about  
A. D. 87.

Of Pothinus, Bishop in Lyons, under whom Irenæus was for some time—how long we do not know—a presbyter, we know less than of Polycarp. But this is known, that he was about ninety years of age when persecution fell upon the Churches in Lyons and Vienne, that he was apprehended and carried before the governor, that he manfully confessed his faith in Christ, was cast into prison, and died soon after. This was in A. D. 177, so that he must have been born about A. D. 87, some time before the death of the Apostle John. What connection, if any, Pothinus had with "apostolical men," we do not know. But from his age and position in the Church, he must have been well acquainted with the Scriptures which were, and had been during his public life at least, held by the Churches to be apostolical. And what Irenæus, his presbyter and successor, wrote on this subject, may be accepted as the testimony of Pothinus as well as his own.

The words of Irenæus must be given in full, that what is weak in them may be seen as well as what is strong.

"We have not received the knowledge of the way of our salvation by any others than those by whom the Gospel has been brought unto us; and which Gospel they first preached, and afterwards, by the will of God, committed to writing, that it might be from time to come the foundation and pillar of our faith. For after that our Lord rose from the dead, and they (the Apostles) were endued from above with the power of the Holy Ghost coming down upon them, they received a perfect knowledge of all things. They then went forth to all the ends of the earth, declaring to men the blessing of heavenly peace, having all of them, and every one alike, the Gospel of God. Matthew,

The Gospels  
according to  
Irenæus.



then among the Jews, wrote a Gospel in their own language, while Peter and Paul were preaching the Gospel at Rome, and founding a Church there. And after their departure, Mark also, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, delivered to us in writing the things that had been preached by Peter; and Luke, the companion of Paul, put down in a book the Gospel preached by him. Afterwards John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned on His breast, likewise published a Gospel whilst he dwelt at Ephesus in Asia." And all these, he goes on to say, in opposition to the Gnostic heresy, "have delivered to us that there is one God, the Maker of the heaven and the earth, declared by the law and the prophets, and one Christ, the Son of God. And he who does not assent to them despiseth indeed those who know the mind of the Lord; but he despiseth also Christ Himself the Lord, and he despiseth likewise the Father, and is self-condemned, resisting and opposing his own salvation, as all heretics do."

The following passage has been preserved only in the old Latin version of the treatise of Irenæus *Adversus Hæreses* :

"Nor can there be more or fewer Gospels than these For as there are four regions of the world in which we live, and four catholic spirits, and the Church is spread all over the earth, and the Gospel is pillar and foundation of the Church, and the Spirit of Life; in like manner was it fit it should have pillars, breathing on all sides incorruption, and four refreshing mankind. Whence it is manifest that the Word, the former of all things, who sits upon the cherubim, and upholds all things, having appeared to men, has given us a Gospel of a fourfold character, but joined in one spirit. The Gospel according to John declares his primary and glorious generation from the Father, 'In the beginning was the Word;' but the Gospel according to Luke, being of a priestly character, begins with Zacharias the priest offering incense to God. Matthew relates his generation, which is according to man, 'The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.' Mark begins from the prophetic spirit which came down from above to man, saying, 'The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as it is written in Esaias the prophet.'"

Reasons for  
Four and  
only Four  
Gospels.

There are passages in Irenæus descriptive of each of the four Gospels, only one of which we shall quote :

Irenæus on  
the Gospel  
by John.

“ John the disciple of the Lord, being desirous, by declaring the Gospel, to root out the error that had been sown in the minds of men by Cerinthus, and a good while before by those who are called Nicolaitans, that he might confute them, and satisfy all, that there is one God who made all things by His word ; and not, as they say, one who made the world, and another the Father of the Lord ; and one the Son of the Creator, and another from the super-celestial places, even Christ, who they say also continued ever impassable, who descended upon Jesus the Son of the Creator, and fled away again into his ‘pleroma.’ [fullness] : the disciples therefore of the Lord, willing, at once to cut off these errors, and leave a rule of truth in the Church—that there is one God Almighty, who by His word made all things visible and invisible ; declaring likewise, that by the Word by which God finished the creation, by the same also He bestowed salvation upon those men who are in the creation ; he thus begins in his doctrine, which is according to the Gospel : ‘ In the beginning was the Word.’ ”

On these passages I remark—

Significance  
of testimony  
Irenæus.

1. The testimony of Irenæus is not to be limited to the date of the writing of his great work *Adversus Hæreses*. This date cannot be certainly determined. But whether it was near the beginning of his “episcopate” (A. D. 177) or towards the end of his life (A. D. 202) is of no consequence. The testimony must be accepted as coeval with his whole life, and therefore goes back to the earlier part of the second century. And not only so, but it may be accepted as substantially the testimony of Polycarp in the East, and Pothinus in the West, and is thus carried back to the very beginning of the second century and the last days of the Apostle John. This, the real bearing of the testimony of Irenæus, is, I might say, studiously ignored by certain critics. Thus, Dr. S. Davidson, in a recent work on “The Canon of the Bible,” says, “Irenæus

Dr. David-  
son on  
Irenæus.

had a canon which he adopted as apostolic. In his view it was of binding force and apostolic. This contained the four Gospels, the Acts, thirteen Epistles of Paul, the first Epistle of John, and the Revelations." The statement that Irenæus "adopted" a canon is simply bewildering to those who do not know the facts. Irenæus "adopted" no canon, but left on record, as a historic fact, that certain books, including the four Gospels, were universally received, and had been from the beginning received, as apostolic and authoritative memoirs of the Lord Jesus Christ. And when Dr. Davidson says that "a wide gap intervenes between eye-witnesses of the Apostles or apostolic men that wrote the sacred books and the earliest fathers who assert such authorship," we reply that the "gap" is not "wide," and that it is well bridged over. Between the Apostle John and Irenæus there intervenes only one man, the venerable Polycarp.

2. The testimony of Irenæus is in no way damaged by the fanciful and unsatisfactory reasons which he assigns for his belief that there *must* be four Gospels, and that there could not be more than four. The veracity and competency of a witness to facts are not to be determined by his explanation of the facts. The explanation volunteered by Irenæus is sufficiently absurd. But that he should attempt any explanation of the fact that there were four Gospels, and any proof that there must be four, and could only be four, only confirms the evidence that it was universally understood that there *were* four and only four. It was an attempt to create around the sacred and acknowledged four, a hedge which it would be at once irrational and impious to break down by the addition of any other Gospel.

3. The same remark applies in substance to other explanations which Irenæus associates with the facts which he states. The connection of the Gospel according to Mark with the Apostle Peter, and the connection of the Gospel according to Luke with the Apostle Paul, may not have been exactly as Irenæus reports. But universal tradition points to some such connection, and can scarcely be accounted for without some fact as its basis—possibly the fact that the Gospels by Mark and Luke were known to have the sanc-

tion of the Apostles Peter and Paul respectively. Then the statement that the fourth Gospel was written by the Apostle John in order to counteract the errors of Cerinthus and others, may be subject to some modification. But these two things are certain—

(a) That errors similar to those ascribed to Cerinthus, which were afterwards developed and embodied in the Gnostic system, were rife in the days of John and long before, as we see from the letter of Paul to the Colossians, in which he enters an explicit protest against philosophic or theosophic speculations by which the glory and proper Godhead of Christ were explained away or reduced to a vague unreality (chap. i. 15–19, ii. 6–10).

(b) It is likewise certain that the Gospel by John contains teachings respecting Christ, which were manifestly fitted to counteract the undeveloped Gnosticism which was then troubling the Churches. The whole scheme of that Gospel was a protest, whether intentional or unintentional, against heresies which occupy a very prominent place in the history of the first three centuries. What more natural than to infer or suppose that the very motive of the Gospel was

to counteract these heresies? If Cerinthus resided at Ephesus, as is commonly believed, and was the contemporary of the Apostle John, this inference or supposition would be so natural as at once to assume the form of a fact. John had a wider aim than that ascribed to him by Irenæus, as we know from his own express statement (20 : 30, 31). His Gospel bears no marks of a controversial purpose. Its whole structure and teaching contain internal evidence, as we believe, of a higher wisdom than that of John, which designed it as the completion of the fourfold portrait of Christ for the benefit of all ages. But whatever amount of inference or supposition there may be in the explanations which Irenæus gives of the motive of John's Gospel, his testimony to the fact of its origin remains intact. In his time, and, so far as he can be regarded as the representative of others, before his time, even from the days of John himself, the Fourth Gospel was believed to be the work of the disciple who leaned on the breast of Jesus at the last supper.

Cerinthus  
and Gospel  
by John.

The full value of the testimony of Irenæus can be estimated only when we have examined other witnesses belonging to the same age.

In the person of Irenæus, we have an illustration of the intimate and brotherly connection which subsisted between Churches in distant parts of the Roman Empire. And a further illustration of it is to be found in letters which the Churches in Gaul addressed to their brethren in Asia Minor, with reference to the persecution in which the Bishop Pothinus Churches in Gaul. Crescens in "Galatia." perished. How and by whom the Gospel was first carried into Gaul we do not know. Doctor Lightfoot thinks it probable that when we read in the apostolic age of a mission of Crescens to "Galatia," the Western Galatia or "Gaul" is meant, rather than the Asiatic settlement which bore the same name. By the middle of the second century Christianity had made such progress in the cities of Southern Gaul, that an attempt must be made to destroy it. And this was done in A. D. 177, under the reign of Marcus Aurelius. The Christians in Lugdunum (Lyons) and Vienne were insulted and abused whenever they appeared abroad, and were plundered in their own houses. The better known were seized and conducted before the magistrates, and if they avowed themselves Christians, they were thrown into prison. Numbers perished in the gloomy cells of the prisons; and even hunger and thirst were employed to aggravate the sufferings of those imprisoned confessors. The Imperial Rescript decreed that those who denied Christ, or denied that they were Christians, should be set free, and that the rest should be beheaded. Those who possessed the rights of Roman citizens were beheaded accordingly, and others were thrown to the wild beasts.—*Neander*, i. 152, etc.

In the letter in which these afflicted Churches told the tale of their sorrows to their brethren "in Asia and Phrygia," Letter from Lyons. References to the Gospels. there are some twelve or more incidental allusions to well-known passages in the New Testament; and two of them are to passages in the Gospels. Of one of their brethren they say, "that, though young, he equalled the character of old Zacharias; for he walked 'in all the commandments and ordinances

of the Lord blameless.'” (Comp. Luke 1 : 6.) And again we read : “Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by the Lord, ‘that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.’” (Comp. John 16 : 2.)

One of the best known names in connection with the second half of the second century is that of Tertullian. He was Tertullian, born about A. D. 160. born somewhere about A. D. 160, and is said to have attained extreme old age. “The Churches of Asia Minor,” says Canon Westcott, “were mainly conservative; the Church of Alexandria was liberal, yet subtle and speculative; the Church of North Africa was fervent, impassioned, pitilessly stern. If Clement embodies the spirit of Alexandria, Tertullian is no less fitted to express the genius of Carthage and Hippo. Restless, impatient of control, glowing with unmeasured zeal, bearing down all opposition with the force of impetuous rhetoric, carried even to the heresy of Montanism by his aspirations after a stricter life, he has left writings which will charm as long as the Latin tongue is read, and a name which will live while courage is a Christian virtue.” —“*The Bible in the Church*,” p. 127.

We cite Tertullian, as we cite Origen and others, without any reference to his peculiar opinions, only as a witness to universally acknowledged facts. We have already quoted a passage in which he appeals to “tradition,” or historic descent from the days of the Apostles, as the only ground on which books could claim acceptance. In the same connection he says, “Let us see what milk the Corinthians drank from Paul; to what rule the Galatians were recalled by his reproofs; what is read by the Philippians, the Thessalonians, the Ephesians; what is the testimony of the Romans, who are nearest to us, to whom Peter and Paul left the Gospel, and that sealed by their own blood. We have moreover Churches founded by John. For even if Marcion rejects his Apocalypse, still the succession of bishops [in the seven Churches], if traced to its source, will rest on the authority of John. And the noble descent of other churches is recognized in the same manner. I say, then, that among

Tertullian  
on the  
Gospels.



them, and not only among the apostolic Churches, but among all the Churches which are united with them in Christian fellowship, that Gospel of Luke which we earnestly defend [against Marcion, who had altered it], has been maintained from its first publication." And "the same authority of the apostolic Churches will uphold the other Gospels which we have in due succession through them and according to their usage, I mean those of Matthew and John: although that which was published by Mark may also be maintained to be Peter's, whose interpreter Mark was, for the narrative of Luke also is generally ascribed to Paul; [since] it is allowable that that which scholars publish should be regarded as their master's work." "These," he says, "are for the most part the summary arguments which we employ when we argue about the Gospels against heretics, maintaining both the order of time which sets aside the later works of forgers (*posteritati falsiorum præscribent*), and the authority of Churches which uphold the tradition of the Apostles, because truth necessarily precedes forgery, and proceeds from them to whom it has been delivered."

## CHAPTER FIFTH.

### TRANSLATION OF THE GOSPELS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SECOND CENTURY.

“AMONG all the means for ascertaining the antiquity and genuineness of ancient books,” says Mr. Isaac Taylor, “none are more satisfactory, or more complete, than those afforded by the Ancient translation. existence of early translations. Indeed, if such translations can be proved to have been made near to the time at which the author of the original work is believed to have lived; and if they correspond, in the main, with the existing text, and if they have descended to modern times through channels altogether independent of those which have conveyed the original work; and if, moreover, ancient translations of the same work, in *several languages*, are in existence, no kind of proof can be more perfect, or more trustworthy. In such cases every other evidence might safely be dispensed with. Ancient translations serve also the important purpose of furnishing a criterion by which to judge of the comparative merits of manuscripts, and by which also to determine questions of suspected interpolations.”

In this respect the case of the four Gospels is very strong. The Peshito or Syriac. There are two translations of the New Testament, which are almost universally assigned to the most remote Christian antiquity. These are the Peshito or Syriac, and the old Latin.

As to the former of these, the very obscurity which hangs over its origin is, as Westcott says (“*On the Canon of the New Testament*,” ch. iii.), proof of its antiquity, because it shows that it grew up spontaneously among Christian congregations, and was not the result of any public labor. Had it been a work of late date, of the third or fourth century, it is scarcely possible that its history should have been so uncertain as it is. The Syriac Christians of Malabar—I quote from Westcott—even now claim for it



the right to be considered as an Eastern original of the New Testament; and though their tradition is wholly unsupported by external evidence, it is not to a certain sense destitute of all plausibility. There can be no doubt that the so-called Syro-Chaldaic (Aramaean) was the vernacular language of the Jews of Palestine in the time of our Lord, however much it may have been superseded by Greek in the common business of life. It was in this dialect, the "Hebrew" of the New Testament, that the Gospel of St. Matthew was originally written, if we believe the unanimous testimony of the fathers; and it is not unnatural to look at the Peshito as likely to contain some traces of its first form. The dialect of the Peshito, even as it stands now, represents in part at least that form of Aramaic which was current in Palestine. In this respect it is like the Latin Vulgate, which, though revised, is marked by the provincialism of Africa. "If a conjecture may be allowed," Westcott says, "I think that the various facts of the case are adequately explained by supposing that versions of separate books of the New Testament were first made and used in Palestine, perhaps within the apostolic age, and that, shortly afterwards, these were collected, revised, and completed at Edessa."

Westcott  
on the  
Peshito.

"Another circumstance serves to exhibit the venerable age of this version. It was universally received by the different sects into which the Syrian Church was divided in the fourth century, and so has continued current even to the present time. All the Syrian Christians, whether belonging to the Nestorian, Jacobite, or Roman communion, conspire to hold the Peshito authoritative, and to use it in their public services. It must consequently have been established by familiar use before the first heresies arose, or it could not have remained without a rival. Numerous versions or revisions of the New Testament were indeed made afterwards, for Syriac literature is peculiarly rich in this branch of theological criticism; but no one ever supplanted the Peshito for ecclesiastical purposes. Like the Latin Vulgate in the Western Church, the Peshito became in the East the fixed and unalterable rule of Scripture." After further discussion, Canon Westcott says: "Mean-

while there is no sufficient reason to desert the opinion which has obtained the sanction of the most competent scholars, that its formation is to be fixed within the first half of the second century."

Next in importance is the old Latin translation\* of the Greek Scriptures. We cannot with certainty determine the date of this translation, but there is reason to believe that it was in existence in the time of Tertullian, and that it was habitually used by him. Its birthplace was not Italy, as might be supposed, but Africa. The Epistle of Paul to the Romans was written, not in the native language of the Romans, but in Greek. And, stranger still, the Epistle *from* the Romans, commonly known as the Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, some forty or fifty years later, was written, not in their native Latin, but in Greek. And at a still later date we find the Bishop of the Church in Corinth writing to a successor of Clement in Greek. Proofs these are of the prevalence of Greek as the language at least of Christian literature in the first age of Rome. "Rome itself under the emperors was well described as a 'Greek city;' and Greek was its second language. As far as we can judge, the mass of the poorer population—to which the great bulk of the early Christians everywhere belonged—was Greek either in descent or by speech." Justin and Hermas published their Greek treatises at Rome, and the Apologies to the Roman Emperors were in Greek.

It is not, then, any occasion of surprise that it is not to the city of Rome, but to the descendants of the Roman colonists in Northern Africa, we have to look for the origin of the old Latin version of the Scriptures. The Church in Carthage becomes first known to us in the last years of the second century through Tertullian. But it was then in a condition of prosperity which indicates that it was not of recent origin. It was a matter

\* For discussions respecting this version and its manuscripts, see article "Versions," by Dr. Tregelles, in *Dr. W. Smith's Bible Dictionary*, and Dr. Scrivener's *Six Lectures*. Also article "Bible" in *Dr. Schaff's Bible Dictionary*.

of complaint that Christianity continued to spread in town and country, among all ranks, even in the highest. They who were but of yesterday, Tertullian said somewhat rhetorically, already fill the palace, the senate, the forum, and the camp, and leave to the heathen their temples only. "These fresh conquests of the Roman Church preserved their distinct nationality by the retention of their proper language." And Canon Westcott regards it as conclusively proved, that Tertullian recognizes a current Latin version of the New Testament, "marked by a peculiar character, and in some cases unsatisfactory to one conversant with the original text." He considers it a fact beyond doubt that a Latin translation of some of the books of the New Testament was current in Africa in Tertullian's time, and sufficiently authorized by general use to form the proper dialect of the country. Of the old Latin there are manuscripts extant, one probably of the fourth century, one of the fourth or fifth, one of the fifth, one of the sixth, and others of later centuries. Speaking of the variations which appear on some of these manuscripts, Dr. Scrivener says: "It can hardly be questioned that the readings preserved in Codices A, B, E, and a few others, were already current before the close of the second century, and thus, to our instruction and infinite satisfaction, represent to us the contents of manuscripts centuries older than themselves."—*Six Lectures*, iv., p. 102.

Westcott on  
the Latin  
version.

The history of the Vulgate version of the New Testament, which the Church of Rome uses as sacred and authoritative, illustrates the antiquity of the "old Latin." The Vulgate was completed by Jerome about A. D. 385, substantially, though not precisely, in the form in which it now exists. "Jerome did not put it forth as a new translation made from the Greek, as he did twenty years later that of the Old Testament taken from the Hebrew; but he retained, so far as faithfulness to the sacred original permitted, the diction, the idiom, the general tone of the elder Latin, which was endeared to Christians by long and familiar use. Even with all this caution to avoid offence, his work at first encountered vigorous opposition, and came into

The Vulgate  
A. D. 385, by  
Jerome.

ordinary use only by slow and painful degrees. As an interpretation his Vulgate far surpasses its prototype; as an instrument of criticism it is decidedly inferior, where the evidence of the old Latin may be had; for it does not, like its predecessor, bring before us the testimony, good or bad, of documents of the second century, but only that of manuscripts which Jerome deemed correct and ancient at the end of the fourth."

There are other translations, African in a still stricter sense than the old Latin. The Latin was prepared for the Roman colonists; the Coptic for the native Egyptian Christians; and they were made, possibly as early as the second century, when the Gospel had already spread from Alexandria far into the interior; certainly before the middle of the third, when the Christian population had grown very numerous, when even their chief rulers, eminent abbots and bishops, celebrated as mighty in the Scriptures, knew no language except their own. There are two Coptic versions, the Memphitic, so called from the old northern capital, Memphis; and the Thebaic, from Thebes, the metropolis of the south. These, says Dr. Scrivener, have now established their claim to be regarded among the very first of the aids to sacred criticism, subsidiary to manuscripts of the original. They are, for the end of the second and the beginning of the third century, guides as faithful and trustworthy as the Syriac versions for a period earlier by eighty or a hundred years. Thus we are deeply indebted to the ancient Christianity of Egypt. That land, now "the basest of kingdoms," was once Christian, and its faith shone for centuries, till it was extinguished by the conquering hosts of the Moslem Arabs. The Copts, who now represent ancient Egyptian Christianity, are a poor, down-trodden, and ignorant race,—a remnant, however, which forms an interesting historic link between the miserable present and a glorious past.

Let us now endeavor to see the bearings of the facts which we have ascertained. "Towards the end of the second century," says a writer who certainly never exaggerates the force of evidence, "we find the four Gospels in general circulation, and invested with full

canonical authority, in Gaul, at Rome, in the province of Africa, at Alexandria, and in Syria. Now, if we think merely of the time that would be taken in the transcription and dissemination of manuscripts, and of the struggles that works such as the Gospels would have to go through before they could obtain recognition, and still more an exclusive recognition, this alone would tend to overthrow any such theory as that one of the Gospels, the fourth. The Fourth Gospel. was not composed before 150 A. D., or, indeed, anywhere near that date. But this is by no means all. It is merely the first step in a process that, quite independently of the other external evidence, thrusts the composition of the Gospels backwards and backwards to a date certainly as early as that which is claimed for them."—Rev. W. SANDAY, M.A., in "*The Gospels in the Second Century*," p. 325.

The argument in support of the conclusion that the four Gospels cannot have come into existence at a period later than the apostolic age, can scarcely be put too strongly.

In the East, as represented by a translation made probably in the earlier part of the second century, certainly not later than the middle of that century; in Africa, as represented by the old Latin translation, made about the middle or before the end of the second century, and by the Coptic somewhat later, and also by Tertullian; in Egypt, as represented by Clement of Alexandria, and by Origen, in the latter part of the second century and earlier part of the third; and in the West, as represented in the second half of the second century by Irenæus, who links together the apostolically-founded Churches of Asia Minor and the later-founded Churches of Southern Gaul—in this whole Christendom, we find the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John universally accepted as genuine and authentic. And this, as we have seen, without any concerted action on the part of the Churches of different lands. These Churches in the middle of the second century, say from A. D. 130 to A. D. 190, *did not borrow the Gospels from one another, but had received them through different channels.* This is especially demonstrable in the case of the two Summary of Argument.

chief translations which have been named. Gaul received its Gospels from Asia Minor, so that the testimonies of these two countries are one. Whence Alexandria received its Gospels we do not know; it is only certain that it possessed the four, in common, as Origen said, with "the whole Church of God throughout the world." But it is demonstrable that the Peshito and the old Latin translations were entirely independent of each other. The one was not made from the other. Nor were the two made from the same copies of the great original. The differences between them, though not affecting their fidelity, are such as to show that they were not based on the same copies. Here then, reckoning Asia Minor and Gaul as one, is proof of the existence of at least three streams of "tradition," using the word in the sense of Origen, issuing from the same fountain at a period which must have been long before, and which cannot be reasonably supposed to be later than, the days of the Apostle John.

It will be remembered that all the Fathers whose testimony respecting the Gospels we have cited, distinctly disclaimed having made any fresh discoveries. Their glorying was that they retained unchanged the traditions of the apostolic age. "They are the interpreters of the past, and not the mouthpieces of a revolution."



## CHAPTER SIXTH.

### THE MIDDLE AND EARLIER PART OF THE SECOND CENTURY.

THE personal testimony nearest to the apostolic age which we have considered hitherto is that of Irenæus, who succeeded Pothinus as Bishop of the Church in Lyons in A. D. 177, his birth probably dating about A. D. 126. This testimony is not, as we have insisted, limited to the period during which he may be said to have "flourished;" it carries us back to the days of Polycarp, at whose feet Irenæus had sat, and through Polycarp to the Apostle John, whose disciple Polycarp was. Ascending the stream from the lifetime of Irenæus towards the Apostolic age, we soon come to another witness, around whose name many battles have been fought, but whose testimony, whether examined in detail or in its more general aspects, is irrefragable.

Justin, afterwards Martyr, was born in Flavia Neapolis (the ancient Sichem, the modern Nablûs), a Roman colony in which Grecian manners and culture prevailed. The year of his birth is not certainly known. By some it is placed as early as A. D. 89, and by some as late as A. D. 118. He was brought up a Greek or heathen, and devoted himself in youth to the study of philosophy. He first joined himself to a disciple of the Stoic, but after a short time left him, with the bitterness of blighted hopes, since of the Deity (in whose nature and being Justin wished, above all things, to be instructed), he could say little, and, indeed, spoke of this subject as holding a very subordinate place in philosophical discussions. But still keener was the disappointment which our inquirer met with from a Peripatetic, who debased philosophy into a mere instrument of secular advantage, and concealed under his philosopher's cloak a sordid love of gain. After giving a few lessons, he demanded of Justin the fee, the payment of which he made indispensable to a continued attendance on his philosophical lectures and exercises. Justin now betook himself to the school of a Pythago-

Justin Martyr, born between A.D. 103 and 118.

rean, and subsequently to that of a Platonist. He seemed now on the verge of the consummating height of the Platonic philosophy, the intuition of the Deity, when a seeming accident gave an entirely different direction to his energies, and, from a contemplative Platonist, changed him into a happy Christian believer. That he might surrender himself undisturbed to contemplation, he one day resorted, as was his wont, to a lonely spot on the sea-shore. But scarcely had he begun to be absorbed in the speculation to which his thoughts were turned, when, happening to look back, he saw coming behind him an aged man of gentle, venerable appearance. After long conversation and friendly discussion, this venerable stranger told him that, in remote ages, there had appeared men called prophets, distinguished above all philosophers by their antiquity and sanctity, and accredited by miracles and prophecies, as organs of the Divine Spirit,—in whose extant writings were deposited the choicest treasures of infallible religious truth. The stranger's words kindled a flame in Justin's heart. He betook himself to the study of the Scriptures, and at last found rest in Christ.\* Justin made no material change in his outward mode of living, but the spirit that animated him was a new one; the aim which he pursued was no longer the same. He continued to wear his philosopher's cloak in order to indicate symbolically, by his outward appearance, that as a Christian he was still a friend of philosophy, though no longer a disciple of human, but of heavenly, wisdom. He retained, also, his former habits in travelling about, teaching and learning, without any fixed dwelling-place, without accepting any civil or Church office.

Here, then, we have a most competent witness of the beliefs of the age in which he lived; competent because of his intelligence, and because of his wide acquaintance with the Christian Churches in several, if not many, lands. Of his many books, the chief that have survived are Two Apologies, or Defences, of Christianity, addressed to the Emperors Antoninus

Justin Martyr's "Apologies."

\* See the story, as told by himself, given at some length in Semisch's "Life, Writings, and Opinions of Justin Martyr," vol. i. pp. 7-23.



Pius and Marcus Aurelius, and a Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew, proving from the Old Testament that Jesus was the Christ. The date of the first of these Apologies must lie between A. D. 140 and A. D. 150. Thus far there is no controversy. And further—

1. It is beyond controversy that the statements made by Justin, expressly or incidentally, respecting the history and teaching of Jesus Christ, correspond with singular exactness with the statements of our four Gospels; so much so, indeed, that a whole history of Christ could be worked out of his writings, and in this history there would be found only two or three insignificant additions to the Gospel narratives. Of this a specimen may be given from the beginning and the end of Christ's earthly life, as put by the Rev. W. Sanday, M.A.—*The Gospels in the Second Century*, p. 91, &c.

“According to Justin the Messiah was born, without sin, of a virgin who was descended from David, Jesse, Phares, Matt. 1:2-6. Judah, Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham. To Mary it was announced by the angel Gabriel that, while yet a virgin, the power Luke 1:26. of God, or of the Highest, should overshadow her, and Luke 1:35. she should conceive and bear a Son whose name she Luke 1:31. should call Jesus, because He should save His people Matt. 1:18-25. from their sins. Joseph, observing that Mary, his espoused, was with child, was warned in a dream not to put her away, Matt. 1:18-25. because that which was in her womb was of the Holy Ghost. Thus the prophecy of Isa. 7:14 (‘Behold a virgin,’ &c.), was fulfilled. The mother of John the Baptist was Luke 1:57. Elisabeth. The birthplace of the Messiah had been indicated by the prophecy of Micah (v. 2, Bethlehem not the least Matt. 2:3, 6. among the princes of Judah). There he was born, as the Romans might learn from the census taken by Cyrenius the first Luke 2:1, 2. *Procurator of Judæa*. His life extended from Cyrenius to Pontius Pilate. So, in consequence of this, the first census in Judæa, Joseph went up from Nazareth, where he dwelt, to Beth- Luke 2:4. lehem, *whence he was*, as a member of the tribe of Judah. The parents of Jesus could find no lodging in Bethlehem, so Luke 2:7.

it came to pass that He was born *in a cave near the village*, and laid in a manger. At His birth there came Magi *from Arabia*,  
 Matt. 2: 2. who knew by a star that had appeared in the *heaven* that  
 Matt. 2: 11. a king had been born in Judæa. Having paid him their  
 Matt. 2: 12. homage and offered gifts of gold, frankincense, and  
 Matt. 2: 1-7. myrrh, they were warned not to return to Herod, whom they had consulted on their way.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Justin relates most of the incidents of the Crucifixion in detail, in confirmation of which he refers to the acts of Pilate. He marks especially the fulfillment in various places of Psalm 22.  
 Luke 24: 40. He has the piercing with nails, the casting of lots, and  
 Luke 23: 34. Matt. 27: 35. dividing of the garments, the sneers of the crowd (some-  
 Matt. 27: 29ff. Luke 23: 35. Matt. 27: 42. what expanded from the Synoptics), and their taunt,  
*He who raised the dead* let him save himself; also the cry of  
 Matt. 27: 46. despair, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken  
 Luke 23: 46. me?’ and the last words, ‘Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.’

Matt. 26: 31, “The burial took place in the evening, the disciples  
 55. being all scattered, in accordance with Zech. 13: 7. On  
 Luke 24: 21. the third day, the day of the sun, or the first (or eighth)  
 Luke 24: 1ff. of the week, Jesus rose from the dead. He then con-  
 Matt. 28: 1. vinced His disciples that His sufferings had been pro-  
 Luke 24: 26, 46. phetically foretold, and they repented of having forsaken  
 Luke 24: 23. Him. Having given them His last commission, they saw  
 Luke 24: 50. Him ascend up into heaven. Thus believing, and having just  
 waited to receive power from Him, they went forth into all the  
 world and preached the Word of God. To this day Christians  
 Matt. 28: 19. baptize in the Name of the Father of all, and of our  
 Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Ghost.”

The bearing of this remarkable identity of the history of Christ in the writings of Justin with the history in the four Gospels, on the genuineness of the Gospels themselves, remains to be considered.

2. It is beyond controversy that Justin *seems* to quote from our

Gospels; that is, that many passages in his writings are identical, or nearly identical, with passages in our Gospels. This will be best shown by a few quotations.

(a) "At the same time an angel was sent to the same virgin, saying, 'Behold, thou shalt circumcise thy womb by the Holy Ghost, and thou shalt bring forth a son, and He shall be called the Son of the Highest, and thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins; *as they have taught who have written the history of all things concerning our Saviour Jesus Christ.*'" (Comp. Matt. 1 : 20, 21, and Luke 1 : 31.)

From the  
First  
Apology.

(b) "But lest we should seem to deceive you, it may be fit to lay before you some of the doctrines of Christ. His words were short and concise, for He was no sophist, but His word was the power of God. Of chastity He spoke in this manner: 'Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, has committed adultery with her already in his heart, in the sight of God. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out; for it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of heaven with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into eternal fire. And he who marries her who is divorced from another man committeth adultery.'" (Comp. Matt. 5 : 28, 29, 32.)

(c) "It is written in the Gospel, that He said, 'All things are delivered to me of my Father. And no man knoweth the Father, but the Son; neither the Son, save the Father, and they to whom the Son will reveal him.'" (Comp. Matt. 11 : 27.)

From the  
Dialogue  
with Trypho.

(d) Speaking of John the Baptist: "They suspected him to be the Christ; to whom he said: 'I am not the Christ, but the voice of one crying, There will come one mightier than I, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to bear.'" (Comp. John 1 : 20, 23, 27; Matt. 3 : 2; Luke 3 : 16.)

(e) "For Christ Himself has said, 'Unless ye are born again, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.'" (From the Apology. Comp. John 3 : 3, 4, 5.)

3. It is beyond controversy that Justin does quote from *some*

written gospels, or appeals to them as the sources of his information. This appears on the face of some of the quotations just given. The following, likewise, are very explicit.

(a) Speaking of the Lord's Supper, he says (in the First Apology): "For the Apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered it, that Jesus commanded them to take bread, and give thanks." (Comp. Matt. 26 : 26 ; Mark 14 : 22 ; Luke 22 : 19, 20.)

(b) "For in the commentaries, which, as I have said, were composed by the Apostles and their followers [or companions], it is written that His sweat fell like drops of blood, as He prayed, saying, 'If it is possible, let this cup pass from me.'" (Comp. Luke 22 : 42 ; Matt. 26 : 39.)

(c) Giving an account of the Christian worship to the Emperor, he says (in the First Apology), "The memoirs of the Apostles, or the writings of the Prophets, are read according as the time allows ; and, when the reader has ended, the president makes a discourse, exhorting to the imitation of so excellent things."

(d) Trypho the Jew is represented as saying to Justin (in the Dialogue), "I am sensible that the precepts in your Gospel, as it is called, are so great and wonderful that I think it is impossible for any man to keep them. For I have been at the pains to read them." Thus showing incidentally that the Gospels which Justin quoted, were known to the outside world, and were accessible to unbelievers as well as believers.

With these facts before us, in regard to which there is no controversy, the question to be determined is whether the Gospels which Justin read, and from which he quoted, were *our four*, or some *other* Gospels older than our four? Most readers will conclude, and that rightly, that but for a predetermined purpose to neutralize if possible the testimony of "The Martyr," this question would never have been asked. And they will soon find as well that even if the identity of his Gospels with our four could not be established, the end for which it is denied would not be accomplished. In proof of their identity let the following be considered :

1. Justin's description of his Gospels corresponds exactly with the facts respecting ours. He describes his as having been written by *Apostles and their followers* or companions. Ours bear the names of two Apostles, Matthew and John, and two companions of Apostles, Mark and Luke.

Proofs of  
identity:  
First.

2. The contents of Justin's Gospels correspond with the contents of ours. This has been already sufficiently shown. The outward facts of our Lord's life, as we find them in the four, are reproduced in Justin's writings, and so are the most supernatural of His works, and the most supernatural aspects of his power and character.

Proofs of  
identity:  
Second.

But two exceptions are taken to this argument. (a) There are palpable variations between the literal words of our Gospels and the corresponding words quoted by Justin from his. To which it is sufficient to reply, that these variations are only such as may easily be accounted for on the supposition that Justin quoted from memory, and that he often put together into one, *even as writers and preachers do still*, the substance of various passages. Justin was addressing heathen emperors, for whom chapter and verse, and a literal transcript of words, were of no consequence. Moreover, similar variations appear in his quotations from the Old Testament, and from those Epistles of Paul which the most skeptical acknowledge to be genuine. And one might as well argue from these that Justin had in his hands a different Old Testament and different Pauline Epistles.

Objections  
answered.

(b) It is further alleged that Justin says some things of Christ and His words that are not found in our Gospels. To which it might be sufficient to reply that in no one instance does Justin profess to quote these things from the "Memoirs of the Apostles," of which he makes such abundant use. Besides, these additions, howsoever to be accounted for, are so insignificant as compared with the mass of matter in which the Gospels correspond, as to be without any weight in the determination of the question. For example: (1) In his dialogue with Trypho, Justin says, "Wherefore also our Lord Jesus Christ hath said, 'In whatsoever I shall find you,

in the same I will also judge you.'” Justin had immediately before quoted Ezekiel, and the conjecture has been suggested that he wrote only the “Lord hath said,” referring to such words as Ezek. 7 : 3, 8, “I will judge them according to their ways;” and the same copyist, supposing that Justin was referring to the words of Christ, inserted in his copy “our” and “Jesus Christ.” But without resorting to a mode of solution which only the clearest necessity justifies in any circumstances, the passage is sufficiently accounted for by the supposition that Justin did not design to quote any particular text, but to represent the meaning or teaching of many of our Lord’s sayings. (2) Justin says that Jesus was “*born in a cave* near the village and laid in a manger,” but he does not appeal to any Gospel in support of the statement. In saying that the child Jesus was *laid in a manger*, Justin implies the fact indicated by Luke (2 : 7), that the place of his birth was not the Khan of Bethlehem, in which there was no room for Joseph and Mary, but what we popularly call a “stable,” the place in which the travellers’ cattle lodged. Tradition seems to have said that this stable was a cave; and it may have been. At all events Justin’s adoption of the tradition proves nothing as against the identity of his Gospels with ours. (3) Justin says (in the Dialogue with Trypho), “And then when Jesus came to the river Jordan, where John was baptizing, as Jesus descended into the water, a fire also was kindled in Jordan; and when He came up out of the water, the Apostles of this our Christ have written, that the Holy Ghost lighted upon Him as a dove.” It cannot escape notice here that the only part of this statement which Justin ascribes to the writings of the Apostles, is that the Holy Spirit descended on Christ like a dove. He does not ascribe the story of the fire kindled in Jordan to any writing or Gospel. He mentions it, believing it, without saying how he knows it. And the distinction between the way in which he mentions the fire in Jordan and the way in which he mentions the descent of the Holy Ghost, goes to prove not a difference between his Gospels and ours, but their identity. It is evident that his Gospels did not contain the story of the “fire” any more than do ours.



It has been supposed by some that, while the Gospels which Justin quotes as those written by Apostles and their companions are our four, he quoted likewise from some "other documents no longer extant," and that this accounts for some of the phenomena of the case. We cannot disprove this supposition, but we hold it unnecessary. The facts are explicable without it. That "other documents no longer extant" may have been current at the time, and may have contained such traditions as that of "the cave," and the "fire in Jordan," is quite possible; but it is certain that Justin never *professes* to quote from them. The only Gospels from which he professes to quote, and in which he tells the Emperor of Rome that the sayings and doings of the Founder of the Christian faith are to be found, are the "Memoirs written by Apostles and their companions."

3. We proceed to a third proof of the identity of Justin's Gospels with ours, and it is one which is independent of minute criticism, and which will hold good whatever judgment we form of the variations to which we have referred. "That the Memoirs [referred to by Justin] were our 'Gospels,'" says Dr. Donaldson, "is rendered extremely probable from the circumstances that he calls them 'Gospels;' that what he narrates of the writers of them harmonizes with the other ancient statements with regard to the writers of the Gospels; and that *if we do not identify them, we are compelled to suppose the existence of books recognized by the Church as written by Apostles, and as such read in the churches, and yet mentioned by no one but Justin.*" — *History of Christian Literature*, ii. 330. More than this, we are to suppose that these apostolic memoirs were suddenly and mysteriously superseded by non-apostolic memoirs of Jesus Christ.

Proofs of  
identity:  
Third.

Between the writing of Justin and the writing of Irenæus there cannot have been more than forty years, possibly not more than thirty. That *our* Gospels, and no others, were in the hands of Irenæus, and accepted as apostolic, we know. His Gospels and ours are identified not only by the names of the authors, but by the description of their

Between the  
writing of  
Justin and of  
Irenæus not  
more than  
forty years.



contents. Now, apart from the fact that the memory of Irenæus covered the whole interval between him and Justin, and looking only at this interval of thirty or forty years,—can we imagine it possible that four Gospels existing at the beginning of that period, and read in the assemblies of the Churches, should have dropped out of existence; and that by the end of that period other four Gospels should have taken their place in universal estimation and usage, and *that* without any protest from any Church or writer, without any record of the change, or any hint that such a change had taken place? I speak of four Gospels in each case. For Justin refers to “Memoirs” written by Apostles and by their companions. And this description, if taken literally, requires two at least of each class. Then Irenæus does speak of two of each class, Matthew and John being Apostles, and Mark and Luke companions of Apostles. And what we are asked to believe is, that the former four disappeared totally, leaving not a single copy to be a witness to their existence, and that the latter four came into existence no one knows how; that the fabricators attached to them the names of two Apostles and two companions of Apostles; and that the Churches accepted them as what they professed to be, without a shadow of evidence of their genuineness, and without even inquiry whether there was a shadow of evidence. It is reckoned by Dr. Tregelles, Mr. Norton, and others, that the number of copies of the Gospels possessed by the Christian communities throughout the Roman Empire in the middle of the second century could not be fewer than 60,000. Let us suppose that they were half that number. That “many” histories of Jesus of Nazareth should have been written in the very beginning, as indicated by Luke, is most natural. And that these “many” should rapidly disappear, when more complete and authoritative records were published by Apostles and by men who were known to be associated with Apostles, is equally natural. But that original and authoritative records (such as Justin describes) should disappear and be superseded by *other histories, written after the days of Justin, and before the days of Irenæus*—that this supersession should take place through the silent, unmur-

Vast number  
of copies in  
second cen-  
tury.

muring, unconcerted, and necessarily unpremeditated, consent of a vast number of independent societies scattered over the world—is, in the favorite language of the author of “Supernatural Religion,” “inconceivable and incredible.” That the snow over a thousand hills should be melted simultaneously by one warm power acting from above, we can understand; but that the books possessed by a thousand Churches, supposed to contain the story of the Author of their religion, should melt away *A reductio ad absurdum.* out of the hands of these Churches, and that their place should be universally and simultaneously occupied by new books, containing a new story, we cannot understand. Many wonders take place “while men sleep,” but this could not.

But let us suppose for a moment that the identity of the Gospels of Justin and Irenæus is uncertain, or even that it is disproved. The fact remains that not only the substance, but the very details of Christ’s history, as they were in Justin’s “Gospels,” are the same as those found in those of Irenæus, our four. What follows? This—as is well shown by the Rev. M. F. Sadler—that there was a fifth Gospel, or collection of Gospels, “older and fuller than any we now possess, witnessing to the Supernatural Birth, Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus.”—“*The Lost Gospel and its Contents*,” p. 64.

The only object, and the avowed object, with which certain critics assail the genuineness of the four Gospels, and labor to prove that they are the products of a later age than that of the Apostles, is to find ground on which to assert that the supernatural elements and incidents which they associate with the name of Christ, are the products of a later age. Now this is “labor lost.” It is proved thus. The very Gospels from which Justin quoted, which are supposed to have preceded ours, and to be now lost, were as full of the supernatural as those which have succeeded them. Their essential conception of Christ is supernatural. Mr. Sadler says well: “The author [of the book “*Supernatural Religion*”] strives to undermine the evidence for the authority of our present Gospels for an avowedly dogmatic purpose. He believes in the dogma of the

impossibility of the supernatural; he must for this purpose discredit the witness of the four, and he would fain do this by conjuring up the ghost of a defunct Gospel, a Gospel which turns out to be far [?] more emphatic in its testimony to the supernatural and the dogmatic than any of the four existing ones; and so the author of this pretentious book seems to have answered himself. *His own witnesses prove that from the first there has been but one account of Jesus of Nazareth.*—"The Lost Gospel and its Contents," p. 64.

The testimony of Justin Martyr carries us up to the very beginning of the second century. Born, if not before, at the very beginning of the second century, converted to Christianity while still a youth, he wrote his first "Apologia" before the *middle* of the second century. His death took place in A. D. 166 or 167, in the

Marcus  
Aurelius  
reigned  
A. D. 161 to  
A. D. 180.

reign of Marcus Aurelius, on occasion of a second visit which he paid to Rome, when brought before the tribunal of Rusticus, who held the office of *Præfectus Urbi*, a Stoic philosopher who had been one of the instructors of Marcus Aurelius. He plainly confessed the philosophy of Christ, in which, after weary seeking, he had found rest. When asked to define his philosophy, he expressed, in a few forcible words, his faith in the God of heaven and earth, and in his Son, "the Master of truth." The prefect asked him if he supposed he would ascend to heaven when his head was cut off. "I know it," he said; "yes, beyond all power of doubt, I know it." On his refusal to offer sacrifice to the gods, he was sentenced to be scourged and beheaded; and the sentence appears to have been immediately executed.

It was either in the same persecution, or some ten years before, that Polycarp suffered martyrdom, and a comparison of dates will show how the lives of Irenæus, Justin, and Polycarp overlap each other, and how in consequence the testimony of one becomes practically the testimony of all.

Polycarp, born A. D. 69 or 70, died A. D. 155 or 156.

Justin, born between A. D. 103 and 118, died A. D. 166 or 167.

According to  
Lightfoot.

Irenæus, born between A. D. 120 and 140, died about A. D. 190.

It will thus be seen that Justin was the contemporary of Polycarp for possibly forty or even fifty years, certainly for thirty-eight; and the contemporary of Irenæus for twenty-six years at the least; while Irenæus was the contemporary of the earliest of the three, and had sat at his feet in his youth. We do not know that Justin had any personal relations with either his senior, Polycarp, or his junior, Irenæus. But we know that all the three were conversant with the Churches, not in a single, isolated portion of the world, but in many lands. Irenæus spent his youth in Asia Minor, and his later years in the south of France. Justin was born in Palestine, but it was in Ephesus he had his famous interview with the Jew Trypho; and it was in Rome he had his contest with the Cynic philosopher Crescens, at whose instigation, it is supposed, he was arrested and tried by the Roman prefect. Polycarp was Bishop of the Church in Smyrna, had intimate relations with other Churches in Asia Minor and with the Churches in Macedonia; and he visited Rome in circumstances which, we shall see, have an important bearing on the question of the four Gospels. Let us know, then, what these three men witness respecting our Gospels, and their acceptance by the Churches of apostolic origin, and we have the witness of entire Christendom, or of the then universal Christian Church, from a period before the end of the first century. And even if we can find no explicit statement on the subject in any extant writing of Polycarp's, the statements of Justin and Irenæus must be accepted as virtually his. They carry us back to his times and ministry, and the Gospels which they describe as apostolic they believed, and they had the means of knowing, were regarded as apostolic in the days of Polycarp.

#### TESTIMONY CITED.

THE GOSPELS.—I and my Father are one.      ATHENAGORAS, A. D. 180.—

That ye may know and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.—John 10 : 30, 38.      The Father and the Son being one; and the Son being in the Father, and the Father in the Son.

There are several other citations of a similar character ; this one is especially significant :

THE GOSPELS.—And he said,      THEOPHILUS OF ANTIOCH,  
The things which are impossible      A. D. 180.—For the things  
with men are possible with God.      which with men are impossible,  
—Luke 18 : 27.      are possible with God.

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, A. D. 194. (For his testimony, see p. 17.)

JUSTIN MARTYR, A. D. 240. (See testimony above.)

THE GOSPELS.—Woe unto      TATIAN, A. D. 172.—You  
you that laugh now ! for ye shall      may laugh, but you will weep.  
mourn and weep.—Luke 6 : 25.

All things were made by him ;      Forsaking dæmons, give up  
and without him was not any-      yourselves to the one God. For  
thing made that was made.—      all things are by him, and with-  
John 1 : 3.      out him was not anything made.

And the light shineth in dark-      This is what is said : The  
ness ; and the darkness compre-      darkness comprehendeth not the  
hended it not.—John 1 : 5.      light. And the word is the light  
of God ; the ignorant soul is  
darkness.

THE GOSPELS.—And they      EPISTLE OF VIENNE AND  
were both righteous before God,      LYONS, A. D. 177.—Of one of  
walking in all the command-      the brethren they say, "That  
ments and ordinances of the      though young, he equalled the  
Lord blameless.—Luke 1 : 6.      character of old Zacharias ; for  
he walked in all the command-  
ments and ordinances of the  
Lord blameless."

Yea, the time cometh, that      Then was fulfilled that which  
whosoever killeth you will think      was spoken by the Lord, that  
that he doth God service.—      whosoever killeth you will think  
John 16 : 2.      that he doth God service.

PAPIAS, A. D. 116.—Eusebius and Irenæus mention that Papias wrote "An Explication of the Oracles of the Lord" in five books. Irenæus also says that Papias was a companion of Polycarp, and a hearer of John, but Eusebius states that Papias does not say in his preface that he heard or saw any of the apostles, though he does claim to have "received the things concerning the faith from those who were well acquainted with them." Papias says, according to Eusebius: "If at any time I met with one who had conversed with the elders, I enquired after the sayings of the elders: what Andrew or what Peter said; or what Philip, what Thomas or James had said; what John or Matthew, or what any other of the disciples of the Lord were wont to say; and what Aristion or John the presbyter, disciples of the Lord, say: for I was of opinion that I could not profit so much by books as by the living."

Papias also states in his books that John the presbyter had said to him of the author of the second Gospel: "Mark, after he had become Peter's interpreter, wrote out accurately as much as he remembered of the sayings and actions of the Lord. This was not done according to historical order; for he had not heard the Lord, and had not been one of his followers, but had subsequently become a disciple of Peter, who arranged his discourses to supply the wants of the moment, and not as if he had intended to make a regular collection of the Lord's sayings. Mark, therefore, made no mistake when he wrote down what he remembered, for he simply undertook this one thing, to omit nothing which he had heard, and to say nothing false in what he related."

Concerning the Gospel of Matthew, Papias says: "Matthew put the sayings of the Lord together in the Hebrew tongue, and every one interpreted them as he was able."—Eusebius, *History III.* 39, as rendered by Dr. Uhlhorn. Again, Eusebius, after citing the testimony of Clement of Alexandria in favor of Mark's Gospel, adds: "And Papias, of Hierapolis, agrees with him."



## CHAPTER SEVENTH.

### THE BEGINNING OF THE SECOND CENTURY AND THE END OF THE FIRST.

POLYCARP is best known through the story of his martyrdom. His reply to the proconsul, who urged him to blaspheme Christ and save his own life, has surrounded his name with a pathetic interest: "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He has done me no wrong. How then shall I curse my king and my Saviour?" Polycarp was martyred during the proconsulship of Statius Quadratus, and this has hitherto been supposed to have been in A. D. 166 or 167—the year in which Justin was beheaded in Rome. But by a fresh and rigorous scrutiny of the proconsular *fasti* of Asia Minor, it is now ascertained, according to Dr. Lightfoot, that Quadratus was proconsul in 154, 155 (*Contemporary Review*, May, 1875, p. 838); and as Polycarp was martyred in the early months of the year, his martyrdom must be dated A. D. 155. This result, we are told, is accepted by M. Renan, and substantially also by Hilgenfeld and Lipsius. The rectification of date thus effected, says Dr. Lightfoot, "removes some stumbling-blocks. The relations between St. John and Polycarp, for instance, as reported by Irenæus and others, no longer present any difficulties, when the period during which the lives of the two overlap each other is thus extended."

From the date of Polycarp's death we infer the date of his birth. He had served Christ, he said, eighty-six years. If the expression refers to his whole life, implying that he had been born of Christian parents and had grown up a Christian, he must have been born about A. D. 69. If the expression means that eighty-six years had passed since, as a youth, he had chosen Christ for his Master, the date of his birth must have been twelve or fifteen years earlier.

But accepting the latest possible date, A. D. 69, Polycarp must have been nearly thirty years old at the time of the

Polycarp,  
A.D. 69 to A.D.  
155.

Polycarp  
contempo-  
rary with  
St. John.

St. John alive  
in A.D. 98.



death of the Apostle John, who was still alive when Trajan ascended the imperial throne in A. D. 98.

Polycarp's acquaintance with, and even discipleship of, the Apostle John, are explained by the known history of the times. Jerusalem fell in the autumn of A. D. 70. The Christians had left the city, warned by the well-remembered words of their Lord. The greater part had retired beyond the Jordan, and founded Christian colonies in Pella and the neighborhood. But the surviving Apostles and personal disciples of Christ sought a home elsewhere. And "from this time forward it is neither to Jerusalem nor to Pella, but to proconsular Asia, and more especially to Ephesus as its metropolis, that we must look for the continuance of the original type of apostolic doctrine and practice" (*Contemporary Review*, May, 1875, p. 828). Ephesus was the headquarters of the Apostle John during the remainder of his life. And there is reason to believe that the companions of his early youth were attracted to the same neighborhood.

"If Polycarp's parents were Christians, they probably received their first lessons in the Gospel from teachers of an earlier date—from St. Paul, who had planted the churches of Asia Minor, or from St. Peter (see 1 Peter 1:1), who appears to have watered them, or from the immediate disciples of one or other of these two Apostles. But during the childhood and youth of Polycarp himself, the influence of St. John was paramount.

Let us now recall what Irenæus has recorded of Polycarp and John. His words have already been given at length. He writes to Florinus to remonstrate against the Gnostic heresy into which he had fallen. They had both sat at the feet of Polycarp, and his appeal now was to Polycarp's teaching. He remembered it well—his personal appearance, and the discourses which he had held before the people, and how he would describe his intercourse with John and with the rest who had seen the Lord, and how he would relate their words. And whatsoever things he had heard from them about the Lord, and about His miracles and about His teach-

ings, Polycarp, as having received them from eye-witnesses of the life of the Word, would relate altogether in accordance with the Scriptures.

In a passage in his work "*Adversus Hæreses*,"—the object of which was especially to show how unapostolic the Gnostic heresy was—we have statements to the same effect. After speaking of the succession of the Roman Bishops, through whom the true doctrine had been handed down to his own generation without interruption, he adds: "And so it was with Polycarp also, who not only was taught by Apostles, and lived in familiar intercourse with many who had seen Christ, but also received his appointment in Asia from Apostles, as Bishop in the Church of Smyrna, whom we too have seen in our youth, for he survived long, and departed this life at a very great age, by a glorious and most notable martyrdom, having ever taught these very things, which he had learnt from the Apostles, which the Church hands down, and which alone are true. To these testimony is borne by all the Churches in Asia, and by the successors of Polycarp to this time.

Moreover, there is an Epistle of Polycarp addressed to the Philippians, which is most adequate, and from which both his manner of life and his preaching of the truth may be learnt, by those who desire to learn and are anxious for their own salvation. And again the Church at Ephesus, which was formed by Paul, and which John survived till the time of Trajan, is a true witness of the tradition of the Apostles."

Now this Irenæus, the disciple of Polycarp, who had a most vivid recollection of his master and of his master's teaching, is the same who only two and twenty years after the death of Polycarp became Bishop of the Church in Lyons, and who, some time after, wrote a work in which he described the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, as the writings of the men whose names they bear, and everywhere received as such. After speaking of the three first, he says, "Afterwards John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned upon His breast, he likewise published a Gospel while he dwelt at Ephesus in Asia." And so impressed was his mind, and

A. D. 177.  
Certainly before A. D. 190;  
"possibly  
so in a few years  
earlier."—  
*Lightfoot.*

even his imagination, with the fact that there were four and only four Gospels, that he revels, as we have seen, in reasons to account for it. There were four regions of the world, and four principal winds; four living creatures in the cherubim, and four general covenants; so there are, and must be, four Gospels. Can we conceive it possible that Irenæus should have written thus of books of which he had never heard while Polycarp lived, books unknown to Polycarp, books which had come into existence during his own lifetime, which, in fact, had been forged and foisted on the world, and become known to himself, only after the death of Polycarp? How could he, in such circumstances, appeal to the Gospel by John, as he does, as the Apostle's protest against the Gnosticism of Cerinthus and others? I cannot imagine how the historical position could be more conclusively established than it is, that *the testimony of Irenæus is virtually the testimony of Polycarp*, the sometime contemporary and disciple of the Apostle John. Irenæus "must have known whether certain writings attributed to the Evangelists and Apostles had been in circulation as long as he could remember, or whether they came to his knowledge only the other day, when he was already advanced in life."

It remains now to be ascertained whether any words of Polycarp's own have survived which threw light on the subject. And here two preliminary remarks must be made:

First—in the words of Dr. Lightfoot (*Contemporary Review*, vol. xxviii., p. 419)—"Irenæus is the first extant writer in whom, *from the nature of his work*, we have a right to expect explicit information on the subject of the canon. Earlier writings which have been preserved entire are either epistolary, like the letters of the apostolic fathers, where any references to the canonical books must necessarily be precarious and incidental (to say nothing of the continuance of the oral tradition at this early date as a disturbing element); or devotional, like the shepherd of Hermas, which is equally devoid of quotations from the Old Testament and the New; or historical, like the account of the martyrdoms at Vienne and Lyons, where any such allusion is gratuitous; or apologetic, like the great mass

No occasion  
for an earlier  
specification  
of the  
Gospels than  
by Irenæus.

of the extant Christian writings of the second century, where the reserve of the writer naturally leads him to be silent about authorities which would carry no weight with the Jewish or heathen readers whom he addressed. But *the work of Irenæus is the first controversial treatise addressed to Christians on questions of Christian doctrine, where the appeal lies to Christian documents.* And here the testimony to our four Gospels is full and clear and precise." If in these circumstances we should find no explicit reference to the four Gospels by name or otherwise in Polycarp, the absence of such reference is no presumption against evidence of another kind which proves that these Gospels were known to him. There are multitudes of Christian books published even now every year, which are as devoid of express reference to our four Gospels as are the epistolary and devotional writings of the apostolic fathers.

There is a second remark of some importance; namely, that of all that Polycarp wrote, time has spared us only his letter to the Philippians. Irenæus tells us of the "Epistles which he sent to the neighboring Churches for their confirmation, or to some of the brethren for their warning and exhortation" (see p. 55). But these have all perished except one, thus greatly narrowing the area of our search into Polycarp's opinions.

Turning to the one surviving letter, what we find in it is, not such an explicit statement as Irenæus has given us, or the less definite though still explicit statement of Justin Martyr, but what we might have expected, the most incidental reference to the teaching of our Lord. Thus:

"But remembering what the Lord said, teaching: Judge not, that ye be not judged: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: be ye merciful, that ye may obtain mercy: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And, Blessed are the poor, and they that are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God" (ch. 2 of Letter to the Philippians). Compare Matt. 5:3; 7:1; Luke 6:20, 36-38.

"Not severe in judgment, knowing that we are all debtors in

point of sin : if therefore we pray the Lord that he will forgive us, we ought also to forgive" (Letter to Philippians, chap. 7). Compare Matt. 6 : 12, 14, 15.

"As the Lord hath said : The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Compare Matt. 26 : 41 ; Mark 14 : 38.

It is of course open to any one to say that Polycarp may have derived these "sayings" of "the Lord" from oral tradition, and not from written Gospels. But there are strong presumptions against this supposition. (a) The form used is quite natural on the supposition that Polycarp derived his knowledge from a book. It is the form which we should use in the like circumstances. Speaking or writing, we would say : "The Lord hath said, Judge not, that ye be not judged," without deeming it necessary to add, "as you find in the Gospels by Matthew and Luke." (b) Polycarp assumes that those to whom he wrote knew as well as he what "the Lord said." "Remembering what the Lord said," he writes. The Philippians knew it as well as the Smyrneans. But this he could not assume, if he was quoting mere recollections of what he had heard from those who had seen the Lord. (c) We find Polycarp ascribing no saying to "the Lord" which is not found in the written Gospels. And (d) still further we find Polycarp quoting from, or referring to words in, almost all the other books of the New Testament without naming the books themselves.

The fair conclusion is that when Polycarp, in the passages quoted, used the words "The Lord hath said," his reference was to books which were well known to the Philippians, and acknowledged by them as containing the sayings of their common Master, Christ. And the character and object of his letter to the Philippians were such that we could not look to it for anything more than this incidental corroboration of what is sufficiently proved in another way.

Polycarp visited Rome to confer with Anicetus, the Bishop of the Roman Church, in regard to the time of celebrating the Passover, the Eastern and Western Churches being divided on the subject. Neither convinced the other, but they parted good friends. The difference of usage did not interfere with

His visit to  
Rome.

the most perfect cordiality ; and, as a sign of this, Anicetus allowed Polycarp to celebrate the Lord's Supper in his stead. The absence of any other and more important question of difference proves conclusively that the Eastern and Western Churches were agreed as to the substance of their faith, its history, and the books in which that history was authoritatively told.

## CHAPTER EIGHTH.

### THE END OF THE FIRST CENTURY.

OF the known Christian writers between Polycarp and Clement, the best known, probably, is Ignatius. But the "letters" of this martyr have been, and are, the subject of so much criticism, that it would divert us unprofitably from the line of our argument to attempt even a summary of the results which may be regarded as established. Enough to say this, that whatever number of the letters ascribed to him are genuine, and whatever portions of the letters, nothing can be extracted from them that is in any wise, or in any degree, inconsistent with the position we have already attained respecting the Gospels. On the contrary, the Christianity of Ignatius is the same supernatural Christianity which we find in the Gospels. "The image of St. Paul is stamped alike upon the language and doctrine of his letters. The references to the New Testament are almost exclusively confined to his writings. Familiar words and phrases show that St. Paul was a model continually before the writer's eyes; and in one place this is expressly affirmed."—WESTCOTT on "*The Canon of the New Testament*," p. 33.

From  
Polycarp to  
Clement.  
Ignatius  
martyred  
about  
A. D. 117.

The Ignatian writings are not without traces of the influence of St. John. After citing some instances, Westcott says: "These passages are not brought forward as proofs of the use of the writings of St. John, but as proofs of the currency of the modes of thought of St. John. They indicate at least that the phraseology and lines of reflection which are preserved for us in the characteristic teaching of the fourth Gospel were familiar to the writer of the Ignatian Epistles. Different readers will estimate the value of the coincidences differently; but if once the Christian society be recognized as possessed of continuous life, they cannot be disregarded."—*On the Canon*, p. 36.

This Ignatius was martyred certainly not later than A. D. 117,



about forty years before the martyrdom of Polycarp; so that he was, for a considerable period, the contemporary of the Apostle John, and may have been for some time the contemporary of other Apostles.

To the same age belongs QUADRATUS, of whom we have a significant notice in Eusebius. Quadratus, according to this historian (book iv. ch. iii.), addressed to the Emperor Hadrian "a discourse, an apology for the religion we profess; because certain malicious persons attempted to harass our brethren. The work is still in the hands of some of the brethren, as *also in our own*, from which any man may see evident proof, both of the understanding of the man and of his apostolic faith."

Hadrian  
reigned from  
A. D. 117 to  
A. D. 138.

"This writer," Eusebius continues, "shows the antiquity of the age in which he lived, in the passages, 'The deeds of our Saviour (he says) were always before you, for they were true miracles; those that were healed, those that were raised from the dead, who were seen, not only when they were healed, and when raised, but were always present. They remained living a long time, not only whilst our Lord was on earth, but likewise when he had left the earth; so that some of them have lived to our own times.' Such was Quadratus. Aristides, also, a man faithfully devoted to the religion we profess, like Quadratus, has left to posterity a defence of the faith, addressed to Hadrian. This work is also possessed by a great number unto the present day."

Survivors of  
Christ's  
Miracles.

This testimony is important. We do not know whether in any part of the lost "Apology" of Quadratus, there was explicit reference to written Gospels. But from the very nature of the work we should not expect to find such. What we might expect we do find; namely, a reference to some general features of the life of Christ. And the small fragment quoted by Eusebius, which contains this reference, is quoted only to show the *ancientness* of the writing of Quadratus—by his speaking of some who had been raised and healed by Christ as being still alive in "his own times." The "times" indicated may have been the youth of Quadratus—how long before we cannot know. But the

Apology by  
Quadratus.

man who addressed Hadrian after he came to the Imperial throne, and who speaks of persons who had been healed by Christ being alive in his own times, must have been for many years the contemporary of the Apostle John, and we have his clear witness to the supernatural works of the Lord Jesus Christ. Contemporary of John.

One of the best known works that have survived from the apostolic or sub-apostolic age, is "The Pastor or Shepherd of Hermas," a book which has often been compared to Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." Lardner (*Credibility*, vol. ii. 59), assuming that the Clement mentioned in one of the visions of Hermas is the well-known Bishop of the Church in Rome who wrote the letter to the Corinthians, thinks that the "Pastor" must have been written *before* the end of the first century. Dr. Donaldson thinks, from some slight allusion to the judicial mode of procedure with reference to those accused of being Christians, that we cannot go farther back than the rescript of Trajan; and, taking all the circumstances into consideration, and noting the respect paid to martyrs, he inclines to the opinion that it was written towards the end of the reign of Hadrian, or in the reign of Antoninus Pius (*History of Christian Literature*, i. 266). Whether we assume the earlier or the later date, this work lies between the date of Clement's letter and the death of Polycarp.

In such a book as that of Hermas we should not expect quotations from the Gospels, or explicit references to them. Accordingly, we find only passages which show acquaintance with the Gospels, of which two examples may be given.

Vision II., Sect. 2: "Happy are ye, whosoever shall endure the great trial that is at hand, and whosoever shall not deny his life. For the Lord has sworn by his Son, that whosoever shall deny his Son, and him, being afraid of his life, they will also deny him in the world that is to come. But those who shall never deny him, of his great mercy he will be favorable to them." Compare Matt. 10 : 32, 33. The "Shepherd of Hermas."

Simil. ix., Sect. 12: "The gate is the only way of coming to

God. For no man shall go to God but by his Son." Compare John 10 : 9, "I am the door," and John 14 : 6, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me."

That these passages, and such as these, are founded on the written Gospels, and in no sense the product of tradition, is made evident by the fact that it is in the same way Hermas founds his words and counsels on passages in the apostolic epistles; of which, for brevity's sake, I give only one illustration :

Simil. v., Sect. 7 : "For if thou defile thy body, thou shalt also at the same time defile the holy Spirit. And if thou defile thy body, thou shalt not live." Words evidently based on 1 Cor. 3 : 17. Lardner quotes some thirty passages from the "Pastor," which bear a similar relation to passages in the apostolical epistles.

More important even than his references to particular Gospels is the witness of Hermas, along with all the apostolic fathers, to the supernatural aspects of the Christianity which they had inherited from the apostles. Singularly enough, the name "Christ" does not once occur in the "Pastor." He is always spoken of as the Son of God. This Son of God is "more ancient than every creature; so that he was present with his Father at the founding of creation. The name of the Son of God is great and immeasurable, and the whole world is sustained by him [or it]. He appeared in the world in the last times, and endured great suffering, that he might do away with the sins of his people. He at the same time pointed out to them the ways of life, and gave them the law which he had received from his Father. He is therefore Lord of his people, having received all power from his Father. He is the rock on which the Church is built, and the only gate by which one can enter the Church. No one can enter the kingdom of God but through the Son, who is most dear to God. Accordingly, the Son of God is preached throughout the nations. Those who deny him in this world shall be denied by him in the next. On the completion of the Church the Son of God will rejoice, and will receive his people with pure will."—(Summary of Hermas's teaching respecting Christ, by Dr. Donaldson, *History, etc.*, i. 283.)

No one can fail to see in this the substance of the Christianity of the Gospel records.

The First Epistle of CLEMENT, as it is commonly called, is believed to be the oldest uninspired Christian writing in existence, and was not improbably written before the Gospel of John. Though bearing the name of Clement, it is properly the letter of the Church of which Clement was bishop or chief pastor. It begins thus: "The Church of God which sojourneth in Rome, to the Church of God which sojourneth in Corinth, to those which are called and sanctified by the will of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to you, and peace from Almighty God through Jesus Christ, be multiplied." The occasion of the letter was a state of party or anarchy which had arisen in the Church in Corinth, through which "its duly appointed presbyters had been unjustly thrust out." And its whole strain and contents are determined by the end at which it aims, the restoration of concord, and with it the restoration of the injured presbyters in the Corinthian Church.

Our purpose does not require us to determine whether the Clement of this Epistle was, or was not, the Clement whom Paul names in his Epistle from his Roman prison to the Philippians (4 : 3).

It is an interesting fact, as we have already seen, that, till quite recently, our copies of this famous Epistle were incomplete. Some three or four years ago, simultaneously almost, two documents were brought to light, which have completed the work : the one a Greek manuscript of the whole, found in the library of the Most Holy Sepulchre in Fanar of Constantinople, and the other a Syriac manuscript, containing a translation of the two so-called Epistles of Clement, found in the collections of a late Oriental scholar in Paris. The second so-called Epistle of Clement has long been known not to have been Clement's. It is now proved to have been a homily by an unknown author.—(As to these discoveries and their significance, see Dr. Lightfoot's *Clement*, Appendix.)

In the newly-discovered portion of the Epistle of Clement, we find that the bearers of the letter were two Romans: Claudius Ephebus and Valerius Bito, who were sent to Corinth with Fortunatus,—the last-mentioned being apparently a Corinthian, and perhaps the same who is named in Paul's First Epistle (16 : 17). These delegates are described as "faithful and prudent men, who have walked with us from youth unto old age unblamably." Now the date of the Epistle, as determined by internal and external evidence alike, is somewhere about the year 95; and as old age could hardly be predicated of men under sixty at least, these persons must have been born about the year 35, or earlier. Thus they would have been close upon thirty years of age when the Apostle Paul first visited Rome, A. D. 61–63.—(Lightfoot's *Clement*, Appendix, p. 256.)

Written ab-  
out A. D. 95.

We are thus carried by the Epistle of Clement into the very heart of the apostolic age, and we have to ask what light it throws upon our Gospels, and upon the Christianity of the first Christians.

Incidental  
references  
to our  
Gospels.

As to the first of these—our Gospels—we find just such incidental references as we might expect from the subject-matter and object of the Epistle—and no more.

Chap. 13: "Let us therefore be lowly-minded, brethren, laying aside all arrogance and conceit and folly and anger, and let us do that which is written. For the Holy Ghost saith, 'Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, nor the strong in his strength, neither the rich in his riches; but he that boasteth let him boast in the Lord, that he may seek Him out, and do judgment and righteousness;' most of all remembering the words of the Lord Jesus which He spake, teaching forbearance and long-suffering; for thus He spake, 'Have mercy that ye may receive mercy; forgive that it may be forgiven you. As ye do, so shall it be done to you. As ye give, so shall it be given unto you. As ye judge, so shall ye be judged. As ye show kindness, so shall kindness be shown unto you. With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured withal to you.' (Comp. Luke 6 : 36–38, and Matt. 7 : 1, 2.) With this commandment and these precepts let

us confirm ourselves, that we may walk in obedience to His hallowed words, with lowliness of mind. For the holy word saith, 'Upon whom shall I look, save upon him that is gentle and quiet and feareth mine oracles.' "

Again, Chap. 46: "Remember the words of Jesus our Lord: for He said, 'Woe unto that man, it were good for him if he had not been born, rather than he should offend one of mine elect. It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about him, and he cast into the sea, than that he should pervert one of mine elect.' Your division hath perverted many; it hath brought many to despair, many to doubting, and all to sorrow." (Comp. Matt. 26: 24; 18: 6; Mark 9: 42; Luke 17: 2.)

Let it be admitted that the words of Christ, referred to by Clement, might have come down to him through sixty years by tradition. But that they were derived from written records, and not from tradition, is rendered more than <sup>Derived from written records.</sup> probable by the fact (*a*) that we find no words ascribed to Christ in this Epistle which are not found in the written Gospels; and (*b*), as remarked in a former case, the writer assumes that the words of Christ, to which appeal is made, were known to the Church in Corinth as well as to the Church in Rome: "Most of all remembering the words of the Lord Jesus" (chap. 13); and "Remember the words of Jesus our Lord." The "words," then, must have been found in documents common to both Churches, documents which both held to be authoritative.

It is no objection to the conclusion that the passages we have quoted from Clement are taken from the written Gospels, or at least based on the words of these Gospels, that they are both anonymous and inexact. Clement quotes very <sup>Quotations anonymous and inexact.</sup> largely from the Old Testament, sometimes whole chapters, and never once names the book from which he quotes. "The Scripture saith;" "One saith in a certain place;" "The Holy Ghost saith;" "The Master of the universe saith," are some of the formulas he uses. Sometimes there is no introductory formula at all, as in Chap. 27: "By a word of His Majesty He com-



pacted the universe; and by a word He can destroy it. *Who shall say unto Him, What hast Thou done? Or who shall resist the might of His strength?* When He listeth, and as He listeth, He will do all things; and nothing shall pass away of those things that He hath decreed. All things are in His sight, and nothing escapeth His counsel, seeing that *the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaimeth His handiwork. Day uttereth word unto day, and night proclaimeth knowledge unto night; and there are neither words nor speeches whose voices are not heard.*" Here we have three verses of the nineteenth Psalm quoted without any intimation that they are quoted, just as any preacher or writer would quote them now. And the words, "Who shall say unto Him, What hast Thou done? Or who shall resist the might of His strength?" are a condensed quotation of several passages, such as Job 9:12 and Isaiah 45:9, and specially of Rom. 9:19. I say specially, because it is admitted that Paul's Epistle to the Romans is genuine, and must therefore have been familiar to the Roman Christians for more than thirty years when Clement wrote.

Clement's quotations from the Gospels, it will be seen, then, are only like other numberless quotations, in being anonymous and not verbally exact. Of the forty books of Scripture to which there are allusions, more or less certainly, in Clement's Epistle, the only one that is *named* is Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians. And this is named for the very obvious reason which appears in the words: "Take up the Epistle of the blessed Paul the Apostle. What wrote he first unto you in the beginning of the Gospel? Of a truth he charged you in the Spirit concerning himself and Cephas and Apollos, because that even then ye had made parties."

While some of the written Gospels receive such incidental support from Clement's Epistle, the doctrines of these Gospels receive the fullest possible support and illustration. Whole pages might be quoted to show that the primitive form of Christianity, as held by the Church in Rome, and by "the very steadfast and ancient Church of the Corinthians," was, to use the briefest form of defini-



tion, the SUPERNATURAL—a Supernatural Christ, and a Supernatural Redemption. The Christ known to these two most primitive Churches was the Christ who died for the sins of men, who rose from the dead, and who has now all power in heaven and earth; and who is again and again referred to thus—"our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory and the majesty for ever and ever, Amen."

The recently discovered documents by which the Epistle has been completed have thrown fresh light on the doctrinal teaching of Clement. In a work of Basil's, written in the fourth century, there was a professed extract from Clement's Epistle, in which the doctrine of the Trinity was incidentally involved, though, as Basil said, "with a more primitive simplicity" than the doctrinal definitions of the third or fourth century. The genuineness of this extract has been questioned by many. But now it is not only found to be genuine, but, as Dr. Lightfoot says, it is much more significant in its context than the detached quotation of Basil would have led us to infer: "As God liveth, and the Lord Jesus Christ liveth, and the Holy Spirit, who are the faith and hope of the elect, so surely shall he who, with lowliness of mind, and instant in gentleness, hath without regretfulness performed the ordinances and commandments that are given by God, be enrolled and have a name among the number of them that are saved through Jesus Christ" (Lightfoot's "*Clement*," Appendix. See pp. 271, 272, and 375). The points to be observed here are twofold, as Dr. Lightfoot remarks: *First*, for the common adjuration in the Old Testament, "As the Lord (*i.e.* Jehovah) liveth," we find here substituted a form which recognizes the Holy Trinity: *Secondly*, this Trinity is declared to be the object or the foundation of the Christian's faith and hope.

There was, it may be added, in the portion of the Epistle already known, a passage in which the doctrine of the Trinity was implied, though not with so much emphasis: "Have we not one God, and one Christ, and one Spirit of grace that was shed upon us? And is there not one calling in Christ?"

The bearing of the testimony of such writers as Polycarp and

Clement to the substantial teaching of the four Gospels on the question of their genuineness, will soon be shown.

#### TESTIMONY CITED.

THE GOSPELS.—Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Judge not, that ye be not judged.

For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

—Matt. 5 : 3, 7, 10 ; 7 : 1, 2.

See, also, Luke 6 : 20, 36–38.

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation. . . .

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you :

But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

POLYCARP, A. D. 108 (Letter to the Philippians).—But remembering what the Lord said, teaching: Judge not, that ye be not judged: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven; be merciful, that ye may obtain mercy; with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And, Blessed are the poor, and they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of God.

And pray for those that persecute you, and hate you, and for the enemies of the cross.

Not severe in judgment, knowing that we are all debtors in point of sin: if therefore we pray the Lord, that he forgive us, we ought also to forgive. . . . With supplication beseeching the all-seeing God, not to lead us into temptation.

The spirit indeed *is* willing,  
but the flesh *is* weak.—Matt. 5 :  
44; 6 : 12-15; 26 : 41.

As the Lord hath said: The  
spirit indeed is willing, but the  
flesh is weak.

THE GOSPELS.—Suffer *it to*  
*be so* now: for thus it becometh  
us to fulfill all righteousness.  
Then he suffered him.—Matt.  
3 : 15.

IGNATIUS, A. D. 107.—Bap-  
tized of John, that all righteous-  
ness might be fulfilled by him.

Be ye therefore wise as ser-  
pents, and harmless as doves.  
—Matt. 10 : 16.

Be wise as a serpent, in all  
things, and harmless as a dove.

For the tree is known by *his*  
fruit.—Matt. 12 : 33.

The tree is manifest by its  
fruit.

Every plant, which my hea-  
venly Father hath not planted,  
shall be rooted up.—Matt. 15 :  
13.

These are not a plant of the  
Father.

Again I say unto you, That  
if two of you shall agree on earth  
as touching anything that they  
shall ask, it shall be done for  
them of my Father which is in  
heaven.

For if the prayer of one or  
two be of such force: how much  
more that of the bishop and of the  
whole church.

For where two or three are  
gathered together in my name,  
there am I in the midst of them.  
—Matt. 18 : 19, 20.

Yet the Spirit is not deceived,  
being from God; for it knows  
whence it comes, and whither it  
goes, and reproves secret things.

The wind bloweth where it  
listeth, and thou hearest the  
sound thereof, but canst not tell  
whence it cometh, and whither  
it goeth: so is every one that is  
born of the Spirit.—John 3 : 8.

But after his resurrection, he  
did eat and drink with them.

Have ye here any meat? And  
they gave him a piece of a broiled

fish and of a honey comb.—Luke  
24 : 41, 42.

So when they had dined.—  
John 21 : 15.

THE GOSPELS.—But I say  
unto you, That whosoever looketh  
on a woman to lust after her  
hath committed adultery with  
her already in his heart.

Give to him that asketh thee,  
and from him that would borrow  
of thee turn not thou away.—  
Matt. 5 : 28, 42.

Give to every man that asketh  
of thee; and of him that taketh  
away thy goods ask *them* not  
again.—Luke 6 : 30.

Whosoever therefore shall  
confess me before men, him will  
I confess also before my Father  
which is in heaven. But who-  
soever shall deny me before men,  
him will I also deny before my  
Father which is in heaven.—  
Matt. 10 : 32, 33.

Behold, a sower went forth to  
sow; and when he sowed, some  
*seeds* fell by the way side, and  
the fowls came and devoured  
them up: some fell upon stony  
places, where they had not much  
earth: and forthwith they sprung  
up, because they had no deepness  
of earth: and when the sun was

HERMAS, A. D. 100.—I com-  
mand thee, that thou suffer not  
the thought of another man's  
wife, or of fornication, to enter  
into thy heart.

Give without distinction to all  
that are in want, not doubting  
to whom thou givest.

For the Lord has sworn by  
his Son, that whosoever shall  
deny his Son, and him, being  
afraid of his life, they will also  
deny him in the world that is to  
come. But those who shall  
never deny him, of his great  
mercy he will be favorable to  
them.

Of the fourth mountain which  
had many herbs, some being  
touched by the heat of the sun  
withered, ~~their~~ herbs having no  
foundation. For as their herbs  
dry away at the sight of the sun,  
so likewise the doubtful, as soon  
as they hear of persecutions,  
fearing inconveniences, return

up, they were scorched ; and because they had no root, they withered away.—Matt. 13 : 3-6.

But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it ; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while : for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word ; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.—Matt. 13 : 20-22.

And some fell among thorns ; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them : but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.—Matt. 13 : 7, 8.

Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.—Matt. 19 : 23, 24.

Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little

to their idols, and again serve them, and are ashamed to bear the name of their Lord. These are they who have faith, but have also the riches of this world. When therefore tribulation ariseth, because of their riches and traffic they deny the Lord. . . . They who are of the third mountain, which had thorns and brambles, are such as believed, but were some of them rich, others taken up with many affairs. For the brambles are riches ; the thorns are they who are entangled in much business and diversity of affairs. These therefore shall with difficulty enter into the kingdom of heaven.

For all little children are honorable with the Lord, and es-

child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. — Matt. 18 : 4.

All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations. —Matt. 28 : 18, 19.

I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.—John 14 : 6.

THE GOSPELS.—Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.—Luke 6 : 36–38.

Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men

teemed the first of all. For they must enter into the kingdom of God, because he has blessed this innocent kind.

He is Lord of his people, having received all power from his Father. . . . They are such as believed the apostles which the Lord sent into all the world to preach.

The gate is the only way of coming to God. For no man shall go to God, but by his Son.

CLEMENT OF ROME, A. D. 96.  
—Especially remembering the words of the Lord Jesus which he spake, teaching gentleness and long-suffering. For thus he said: “Be ye merciful, that ye may obtain mercy; forgive, that it may be forgiven unto you. As you do, so shall it be done unto you: as you give, so shall it be given unto you: as ye judge, so shall ye be judged; as ye show kindness, so shall kindness be shown unto you: with what measure ye mete, with the same shall it be measured to you.” By this command, and by these rules, let us establish ourselves, that we may always walk obediently to his holy words.

should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.—Matt. 8:1, 2, 12.

Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some *seeds* fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

But woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.—Matt. 13: 3-6; 26: 24.

And whosoever shall offend one of *these* little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.—Mark 9: 42.

It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe *unto him* through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. — Luke 17: 1, 2.

Remember the words of the Lord Jesus. For he said: "Woe to that man [by whom offences came]. It were better for him that he had not been born, than that he should offend one of my elect. It were better for him that a millstone should be tied about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the sea, than that he should offend one of my little ones."



Though the genuineness of the Epistle of Barnabas has been disputed, it has on the other hand been maintained that it is one of the most ancient of uninspired documents, and is assigned by Prof. Norton to the middle of the second century, by others to an earlier date, and by Dr. Lardner and Dr. Lee (*On Inspiration*) to the latter part of the first century, which is accepted by G. Rawlinson. See *Historical Evidences*, p. 208.

THE GOSPELS.—If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.—Matt. 16 : 24.

So the last shall be first, and the first last : for many be called, but few chosen.—Matt. 20 : 16.

For many are called, but few *are* chosen.—Matt. 22 : 14.

Give to him that asketh thee.—Matt. 5 : 42.

Give to every man that asketh of thee.—Luke 6 : 30.

For I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.—Matt. 9 : 13.

He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, the LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? —Matt. 22 : 43, 44.

And except those days should be shortened, there should no

THE EPISTLE OF BARNABAS (?), 71–150 (?).—So they, saith he, who will see me, and obtain my kingdom, must receive me with many afflictions and sufferings.

Let us therefore beware, lest it should happen to us as it is written : “There are many called, few chosen.”

Give to every one that asketh.

That he might show that he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

But because they would say that Christ is the son of David, therefore fearing and knowing the error of sinful men, he says : “Sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool. Behold how David calls him Lord.”

For this cause the Lord has shortened the times and days,

flesh be saved : but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.—Matt. 24 : 22.

For it is written, "I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad."—Matt 26 : 31.

that his beloved might hasten his coming to his inheritance.

When I shall smite the shepherd, then the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.

## CHAPTER NINTH.

### THE APOSTLE PAUL AN INDEPENDENT WITNESS TO THE PRIMARY GOSPEL FACTS.

FROM Clement we pass to one who *possibly* was Clement's teacher, the latest of whose still extant writings are older than Clement's by more than thirty years, and the earliest by more than forty. The earliest of Paul's writings are older, probably, than the oldest Gospel; even his latest, the letters to Timothy and Titus, may be. So that we cannot find in them even such incidental references to the Gospels as we find in Clement. What we shall find in them is, a clear and unmistakable testimony to the great facts of which the Gospels contain the history; these facts, assumed as acknowledged by all Christians, forming the very basis, and furnishing the inspiring principles, of the entire Christian system as expounded by Paul.

But exception may be taken at the outset to any appeal to the Apostle Paul in support of the Gospels: we identify him so entirely with the four Evangelists that we might as well appeal to themselves. But it is not so. Paul was not one of the original followers of Christ. He became a convert some years after the close of Christ's personal ministry on earth, and we have in our hands writings which pronounced Rationalists admit to have come from his pen. We cannot cite him as an eye-witness of the works of Christ, and of the events of his life, but we may as a witness of what the eye-witness of these works and of these events uniformly reported respecting them. Secondary testimony like his, if found in harmony with the records which bear the names of the four Evangelists, will furnish a strong corroboration of the genuineness of these records.

The Epistle to the Romans; 1st and 2d Epistle to the Corinthians; and the Epistle to the Galatians.

But much will depend on the competency and honesty of this secondary witness. Had he sufficient means of knowing the facts of which he was not an eye-witness? Was he

Competent and honest.

weak and credulous, and thus in danger of being deceived? Or was he intelligently and earnestly awake to the importance of knowing the truth, for his own sake, and for God's sake, and for the world's sake?

In answer to these questions I am content to follow a Rationalist author, who regards Paul's contributions to the life of Jesus as older than the Gospels, and who attaches the utmost importance to them. As to Paul's competency and thoroughness, Keim writes (in his *History of Jesus of Nazara*) unhesitatingly; Paul's conversion—we only abridge Keim—is variously fixed between A. D. 31–41, but is now generally placed between A. D. 36–38. It is sufficient for us to know that from the year 40 to the year 64, the year of his death, under the Emperor Nero, Paul preached Jesus the Christ to the Roman world from East to West. Paul's ministry and that of Jesus were not separated by more than a decade at most; according to Keim's opinion, if Jesus died in the year 35, and Paul was converted in the year 37, only two years lay between. He *may* have seen and heard the Lord himself, though without believing in him. He witnessed the death of the first Christian martyr, Stephen. He had spent his youth in Jerusalem, and must, therefore, with his teachers, the Pharisees, have interested himself in the new Galilean teacher from the time of the disputations in the temple to that of the crucifixion.

In reply to those who say that Paul “converted facts into ideas, and ideas into facts,” Keim says, “Paul was not indifferent to historical facts. It should be remembered that information concerning the life of Jesus sometimes offered itself to him, sometimes forced itself upon him, in Jerusalem, in Damascus and Antioch, in the person of Ananias, a Barnabas, a Silas, a Philip, a Mnason, as well as in the persons of the apostles and Christians of the holy city; and it is by no means a proof of a long-continued indifference to the history with which he had from the beginning been partially acquainted, that at the close of the third year after his conversion he travelled to Jerusalem with the express object of becoming acquainted with Peter, and of learning from him, certainly not merely his principles, but the details of his intercourse with Jesus.

It is, however, quite enough to know what his Epistles reveal."—(*Jesus of Nazara*, vol. i., p. 50.)

The life of Jesus, Keim believes, must have been far more richly at Paul's command than is now apparent; for in his Epistles he always assumes that the elements of tradition, the delineation of the figure of Christ, stand before the eyes of his readers. "It would even be easy to show that Paul was *compelled* to satisfy his own mind, historically and critically. His conversion had to struggle into existence through *doubt and denial*, and his mental character was pre-eminently logical; he was never happy until his ideas were firmly established, until he had arrived at positive conclusions, and had anticipated all objections. Shall we suppose that he believed in the Messiah, and yet had troubled himself either not at all, or only superficially and generally, about those facts which must support or overthrow his faith? We are thus led to two important conclusions. In the first place, the apostle's faith must have rested, not upon the meagre notices of the person of Jesus which we find in his writings, but upon a knowledge of his life sufficiently comprehensive to justify all the results of his reasoning, and to present to his mind, either on the ground of his own observation or that of others, the picture of a character without spot and full of nobility. And, in the second place, this knowledge of the apostle's is not the fruit of a blind acceptance of unexamined Christian tradition, picked up here and there, but, as the case of his inquiry into the evidences of the resurrection shows, was arrived at by means of a lucid, keen, searching, skeptical observation, comparison, collection, and collation of such materials as were accessible to him."—(Keim, vol. i., p. 52.)

What, then, are the Gospel facts which we find in the undisputed writings of this most competent witness? These writings may be said to be instinct with the facts recorded by the Evangelists respecting Jesus. But we cite only passages that may be isolated from their connection. We no sooner open the Epistle to the Romans than we read: "Jesus

The facts  
testified by  
Paul.

Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God, with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." We have here the Davidic descent of Jesus, which occupies an important place in the Gospels, inasmuch as the Messiah was to be the Son of David; and the vindication of his higher claims by His resurrection from the dead. Paul evidently had in his mind the fact that Jesus was put to death because "He said that He was the Son of God." The high priests deemed, or affected to deem, this assertion blasphemous. But Paul here declares that it was made good by His resurrection from the dead.

The many passages in which Paul refers to the death and resurrection of Christ need not be quoted. But there are two passages in the First Epistle to the Corinthians which deserve special notice:

"I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come."

This remarkable passage occurs quite incidentally. We owe it entirely to the circumstance, that the Corinthian Church had been guilty of certain disorders in their observance of the Lord's Supper. But for this we should not have known what Paul *had delivered* to them on the subject. And if other circumstances had been of a kind to call for the special mention of other events in the life of Christ, we should doubtless have found them.

The other passage in First Corinthians to which we have referred, is in chap. 15: 1-8: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed

in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures: and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures: and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of about five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the Apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time."

This most important passage, like the former, is incidental. That is, it did not arise from any express purpose to record the facts of Christ's life, but from the circumstance that in the Church of Corinth there were speculations which, denying a real future resurrection of the dead, implied a denial of the resurrection of Christ Himself. And the passage shows how minute was the knowledge Paul possessed of the great event of our Lord's resurrection. It was not the fruit, as Keim well remarks, of a blind acceptance of unexamined tradition, picked up here and there, but attained by means of a keen and searching collection and collation of the means of information which were within his reach.

In both passages Paul refers to the grounds of his statements. In 1 Cor. 11:23: "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you." In 1 Cor. 15:3: "I delivered unto you that which also I received." The difference between the two forms of statement is significant. The omission in the latter case of "of the Lord," or of any equivalent expression, cannot be accidental. The facts which he specifies respecting the appearances of the risen Christ, he "received," as other historic facts are ordinarily received, by the testimony of witnesses. But when he says, "I received of the Lord," he must mean more than this. The expression conveys the idea which we find in Gal. 1:11, 12: "I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." The facts of the institution of the Lord's Supper were such as might be communicated by ordinary means. But if they did reach Paul by ordinary means — and we



can scarcely imagine his refraining from inquiry of those who were present on the memorable occasion—he seems to have had a “revelation” on the subject, on the authority of which he prescribed to the Corinthians the proper mode of observance (see Meyer’s Commentary on the passage).

But in either case, the material fact is the same, that we have in the very earliest or oldest Christian writings, those undisputed letters of the Apostle Paul, a summary of most important facts in the history of Jesus Christ—a summary written incidentally before any of our Gospels were written—and with this summary the histories written at a later period by the four Evangelists are in perfect accord. To this extent the genuineness of the four evangelic histories receives corroboration from the independent testimony of Paul, who, though the last to be called to the apostleship, is, by means of his letters, the earliest witness whose words are now within our reach.

In establishing the historic origin of the Gospels, the testimony of Paul, whose Epistles are unquestionably genuine, may very properly be cited in proof. In this, it has already been shown, he must be accepted as an independent witness. The facts in the Gospels to which he alludes are numerous; a few only are cited in parallel columns:

THE GOSPELS.—Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said. And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed *it*, and brake *it*, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed

PAUL.—For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the *same* night in which he was betrayed, took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake *it*, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also *he took* the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testa-

for many for the remission of sins.—Matt. 26 : 25-29.

And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake *it*, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave *it* to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.—Mark 14 : 22-24.

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide *it* among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake *it*, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.—Luke 22 : 17-20.

Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost . . . And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock . . . He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly,

ment in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.—1 Cor. 11 : 23-26.

[Here are more than ten coincident facts given in the Gospels, and stated by Paul: Christ was betrayed; on that night he took bread; he gave thanks; he broke the bread; he charged the disciples to eat; to do it in remembrance of him; he took the cup, in like manner; after supper: called it a new testament; it was to shew the Lord's death; and until he come; this bread was the Lord's body, and the cup, his blood.]

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures: and that he was seen of Cephas, then of

and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead.—Matt. 27 : 50, 60 ; 28 : 6, 7.

And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them : *then* came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace *be* unto you . . . After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias ; and on this wise shewed he *himself*. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the *sons* of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.—John 20 : 26 ; 21 : 1, 2.

So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.—Mark 16 : 19.

For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.—John 5 : 22.

Compare also Matt. 25 : 31–46.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world.—John 3 : 16, 17.

the twelve : after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once ; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James ; then of all the apostles.—1 Cor. 15 : 3–7.

[Here five coincident events are stated : 1. Christ died ; 2. He was buried ; 3. He rose again ; 4. He was seen after his resurrection by Peter ; 5. And seen by all the Apostles.]

*It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us . . . In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.—Rom. 8 : 34 ; 2 : 16.

God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.—Gal. 4 : 4.

Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh : and declared to *be* the Son of God with

And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David *are* fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon *are* fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ *are* fourteen generations.—Matt. 1 : 16, 17.

No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, *even* the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up. That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.—John 3 : 13-15.

power, according to the Spirit of holiness.—Rom. 1 : 3, 4.

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.—2 Cor. 8 : 9.

These citations from the writings of Paul might be extended, showing his concurrent testimony in respect to many other facts in the Gospel history, and tending to prove the early origin of the Gospels and their credibility. Similar passages could also be given from the Epistles of Peter and of John, and from the Revelation. It cannot be fairly alleged that this is proving one portion of a book by another portion of the same, for the writings of Paul and Peter are independent of the Gospels, and they are competent witnesses in respect to any facts narrated in other books, and by other authors. These coincidences in the narrative contained in the Gospels, and in that of the Epistles, have been suggested by others; but, so far as the editor is aware, no attempt has before been made to collate these passages and place them side by side, so that their significance could be fully appreciated.

## CHAPTER TENTH.

### ON THE FOURTH GOSPEL—SPECIAL.

THE great battle of the faith is now fought around the person of our Lord Jesus Christ—who and what He was—and around that Gospel which gives greatest prominence to His Divine dignity and glory. This renders it needful, or at least desirable, to show that the fourth Gospel is as certainly apostolic and genuine as the other three. But anything like a thorough review of the lines of argument which have been brought to bear on the subject, positive and negative, in a brief chapter, is impossible. All that can be attempted is such a statement as will make the subject intelligible to ordinary readers.

Those who have followed the argument of this volume thus far, will remember that up to a certain point we have the same evidence for all the Gospels *equally*. In the days of the Diocletian persecution (beginning A. D. 303), the Gospel by John was as well known, and as universally recognized, as those by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. In earlier days, those of Origen (A. D. 184-253), it was the same. Origen speaks of "*the four Gospels*," which were "the only undisputed ones in the whole Church of God throughout the world," and the fourth, which he describes as that which was written by "the disciple whom Jesus loved," was his special delight. He wrote commentaries on all the Gospels, which unhappily have perished. In the still earlier days of Irenæus (about A. D. 126-190), we find the same universal acceptance of the fourth with the other Gospels. Irenæus characterizes each of the four in a way which demonstrates their identity with our four. And his testimony has especial force in support of the Gospel by John. As the disciple of Polycarp, the disciple of John, and having a vivid recollection of his master and his teaching, he must have known whether the so-called Gospel by

John was known to, and acknowledged by, John's disciple. He was thirty years of age when Polycarp was martyred; and it is not conceivable that he could have accepted, as the work of John, a book of which Polycarp knew nothing, and which had come to his own knowledge only after his master's decease. Moreover, the reasons which he assigns why there could be only four Gospels, and the explanations he gives of the circumstances in which John wrote his Gospel, all imply that the book was not a recent discovery, but had been known as far back as his knowledge extended. His explanations may not be accurate or complete, but they are of a kind which shows that the subject of them, the book itself, must have been ancient, or in existence before the days of Irenæus.

To the age immediately preceding that of Irenæus—at least preceding that in which he held the office of presbyter and bishop in Lyons, and in which he wrote his great work, *Adversus Hæreses*—belong the two translations, the Syriac and the old Latin. And the fourth Gospel has its place in these translations side by side with the other three. Now let the reader recall what has been said about these ancient versions, and he will see how we are compelled to look for the origin of this Gospel not later than the end of the first or beginning of the second century. The Syriac dates from before the middle of the second century, and the old Latin not much later. And these translations were made from different manuscripts and in parts of the world distant from each other. The original from which these manuscripts had descended through different channels must then be sought at some considerable distance of time, a distance which cannot be reckoned as less than half a century.

Justin Martyr belongs to the first half of the second century, having suffered in A. D. 166 or 167; and the argument founded on his writings, which need not be repeated, includes the fourth with the other Gospels. So indubitable is the correspondence between Justin's doctrine of the "Logos"—the "Word" Incarnate in Christ—and that of the exordium of the fourth Gospel, that in order to get rid of the conclusion that Justin derived it from the Gospel,

some critics have resorted to the desperate hypothesis that the fourth Gospel derived it from Justin!—forgetting that Justin appeals to the “Memoirs of the Apostles and their companions,” as containing the history of the faith which he professed.

To the age of Justin and Irenæus belongs a fragment which bears the name of its discoverer, Muratori. The fragment is in Latin, but from its Greek idioms it is admitted to be a translation from the Greek; and from other internal evidence it is certain that the original cannot have been written much later than A. D. 170. This fragment commences with the last words of a sentence which evidently referred to the Gospel of St. Mark. The Gospel of St. Luke, it is then said, stands third in order [evidently in the Canon], having been written by “Luke the Physician,” the companion of St. Paul, who, not being himself an eye-witness, based his narrative on such information as he could obtain, beginning from the birth of John. The fourth place is given to the Gospel of St. John, “a disciple of the Lord,” and the occasion of its composition is thus described: “At the entreaties of his fellow-disciples and his bishops, John said, ‘Fast with me for three days from this time, and whatever shall be revealed to each of us [*i.e.*, most probably, whether it be favorable to my writing or not], let us relate it to one another.’ On the same night it was revealed to Andrew, one of the Apostles, that John should relate all things in his own name, aided by the revision of all. . . . What wonder is it then that John brings forward every detail with so much emphasis, even in his Epistles saying of himself, What we have seen with our eyes, and heard with our ears, and our hands have handled, these things have we written unto you? For so he professes that he was not only an eye-witness, but also a hearer, and, moreover, a historian of all the wonderful works in order.”—See “*The Canon of the New Testament*,” by Westcott, who gives this fragment entire in his Appendix.

A remark already made (see pp. 55 and 56) with reference to the reasons which Irenæus gives why there should be four Gospels and only four, and the explanations which he gives of the relation



of John's Gospel to the heresy of Cerinthus, may be repeated here. Testimony to fact is not invalidated by any defect or misconception in the reasons and explanations of the fact. The Muratorian fragment may not be perfectly correct in its statement respecting Andrew and the other fellow-disciples of John, but the statement points to the fact that Ephesus was, after the destruction of Jerusalem, the home not of John alone, but of other personal disciples of Christ: and nothing can be more probable than that these disciples and others should greatly desire to receive from the pen of John reports of his Lord's words and works which they had often heard from his lips.

The Muratorian fragment corroborates very satisfactorily the conclusion to which we are led by other evidences as to the position of the Gospel by John, as well as the other Gospels, in the middle of the second century, and, by inference, in the very beginning of the century. Its author "regards our canonical Gospels as essentially one in purpose, contents, and inspiration. He draws no distinction between those which were written from personal knowledge, and those which rested on the teaching of others. He alludes to no doubt as to their authority, no limit as to their reception, no difference as to their usefulness. "Though various ideas (*principia*) are taught in each of the Gospels" (we read), "it makes no difference to the faith of believers, since in all of them all things are declared by one Sovereign Spirit concerning the Nativity, the Passion, the Resurrection, the Conversation [of our Lord] with his disciples, and his double Advent, first in humble guise, which has taken place, and afterwards in royal power, which is yet future." "This," says Dr. Westcott, "the earliest recognition of the distinctness and unity of the Gospels, of their origin as due to human care and Divine guidance, is as complete as any later testimony. The fragment lends no support to the theory which supposes that they were gradually separated from the mass of similar books. Their peculiar position is clear and marked; and there is not the slightest hint that it was gained after a doubtful struggle or only at a late date. Admit that our Gospels were regarded from the first as authoritative records of Christ's life,

even when they did not supersede the living record of apostolic tradition, and then this new testimony explains and confirms the fragmentary notices which alone witness to the earlier belief: deny that it was so, and the language of one who had probably conversed with Polycarp at Rome becomes an unintelligible riddle. It would be necessary in that case to suppose that the Gospels had usurped a place during his lifetime to which before they had only made claim in common with other rivals, and yet he speaks of them as if they had always occupied it."—*The Canon, etc.*, p. 213.

If my plan admitted of the necessary critical discussions, I should adduce here other testimonies to the existence of the fourth Gospel, and its reception as the work of the Apostle John, in the earlier part of the second century. But I forbear.

Almost as important as the testimony of the Christian fathers themselves, is the testimony of those with whom they contended as unbelievers or misbelievers.

The oldest polemic treatise against the Christian faith was written by Celsus about A. D. 176–180, perhaps earlier, 161–169. Celsus had made the Christian books his study. "We perceive with amazement," says a German critic, "how profoundly the eclectic philosopher must have studied the doctrine of Christianity. He has gone back to the first sources everywhere. He has read and used not only the Old Testament, but also our Synoptic Gospels, and perhaps even Paul's epistles. It is undeniable that he knew John's Gospel. Indeed Keim has proved convincingly that the whole image of Christ, which Celsus composed for himself, and against which he then contends with scorn and derision or in calm demonstration, is taken in great part from John's conception and presentation of him."—Quoted by Luthardt, in "*The Authorship of the Fourth Gospel*," ch. iv. Celsus's acquaintance with the canonical literature of the Church goes hand in hand with his knowledge of the Christian "great church," in distinction from the Gnostic sects. His quotations from the Gospel history, his emphasizing the alleged contradictions, and the like, proves that he used our canonical Gospels. He refers most frequently to Matthew;

Celsus.

still he uses John more than Mark and Luke. In fact the whole Christological stand-point of the Church, as Celsus describes it, is John's. Certainly nobody who reads Keim's text of Celsus can avoid this impression. *It follows from this that John's Gospel was at that time a record of Christianity known by friend and foe. Therefore it will not do to talk of it as originating in that or in the immediately preceding time.*

We should only bewilder our readers, as well as ourselves, by any attempt to unravel the history and the opinions of the Gnostic sects, of which we read so much in the records of the second and third centuries. Their best known leaders, Valentinus, Basilides, and Marcion, belonged to the first half of the second century. And their rejection of particular books and doctrines proves the existence of these books and doctrines in the Christian Church of their times. Let one example suffice, that of Marcion, as epitomized by Luthardt.—“*Commentary on the Gospel by John*,” vol. i. 225.

Marcion came to Rome about 140. Before this he was active in Asia Minor. Hence he was probably older than Valentinus, and perhaps than Basilides. After the manner of our modern Tubingen critics, he kept appealing to the second chapter of Galatians, to prove from it a difference between the preaching of Paul and the original Apostles. He therefore made it his task to reform Christianity, which had been Judaized, strangely enough by the original witnesses of Christ, and to bring it back to its pure form which he found in Paul, although Paul was but a secondary witness! In accordance with this, he proceeded to put the canon and the single New Testament books in order. In this it was natural that he should limit himself to Luke's Gospel, corrected by himself, and that he should reject the two apostolic Gospels, Matthew's and John's, *for the very reason that they came from original Apostles.* We perceive from Tertullian's remarks that Marcion knew the fourth Gospel as John's, and *rejected it on that account.* As he was from Asia Minor, and as he, being the son of a bishop, must have known the tradition of that region, his historical testimony has the more weight.

Thus the Gnostic circles, as early as 130, were acquainted with John's Gospel as an apostolic book. It must, then, have been recognized more thoroughly and still earlier in Church circles. This compels us to go back for its origin to the beginning of the second or end of the first century, namely, to the times of the freshest recollections of John. But at that date they would not, in Johannean circles, have accepted a book as John's if it had not come from the Apostle, and much less if it were foreign to his way of thinking. If the fourth Gospel passed for John's in those circles at that time, it must have been John's; or else the whole tradition of John in Asia Minor is an error. Keim assumes this latter position. But this is only a desperate attempt to cut a knot which he cannot untie. And in his denial of John's residence in Ephesus, he is strongly opposed by critics of his own school. Even if the Apostle's residence in Ephesus was doubtful, the fact would still remain that the Gospel which bears his name was accepted as from his pen, in the very earliest years after his death, by those who had the strongest reasons for rejecting it, as well as by those who gloried in its revelations of the Christ.

The fact is singular and significant, that the Johannine authorship of the fourth Gospel was questioned for the first time by any professing the name of Christian, at the end of the eighteenth century, less than a hundred years ago. The ancient sect of Alogi can scarcely be taken into the account. Their name, though not assumed by themselves, sufficiently indicates the ground of their rejection of all the writings of the Apostle John. They denied the "Logos"—the "Word"—and therefore declined to receive any writings of him who might be called the Apostle of the Logos. But their history is altogether so obscure that Lardner goes so far as to call the "heresy" of the "Alogi" fictitious, and to say that "there never were any Christians who rejected St. John's Gospel and the First Epistle, and yet received the other Gospels, and the other books of the New Testament."—*Works*, vol. viii. p. 628. Lardner, himself a Unitarian, says further: "There has been a notion among learned moderns that the Unitarians of the second

century, who appeared soon after the Apostles, rejected St. John's Gospel. But how groundless this supposition is, must clearly appear from our accounts of Theodotus, Praxeas, and others of that principle." Whether Lardner is right or not in calling these "Unitarians," it is certain that Praxeas and his followers not only admitted the fourth Gospel as apostolic, but, as Lardner expresses it, were "very fond of John's writings."

It was reserved for one who was, or had been, a clergyman of the Church of England to sound the keynote of that opposition to St. John's Gospel, which has not yielded to the overwhelming evidence which it has itself been the means of eliciting in support of its apostolic authorship. When holding the livings of Tewkesbury and Longdon, Edward Evanson ventured on some changes in the liturgy to suit opinions which he had adopted, and which were then, or very soon after, substantially Unitarian. Eventually he resigned his livings, and in 1792 he published a work entitled "The Dissonance of the Four generally received Evangelists." His studies, he declared, had led him to the conclusion that the Gospel by Luke is the only one of the four that is authentic, and that the Epistles to the Romans, to the Ephesians, to the Colossians, to the Hebrews, of James, of Peter, of John, of Jude, and, in the Book of Revelation, the Epistles to the seven Churches in Asia, should be "expunged out of the volume of duly authenticated Scriptures of the New Covenant!"

Evanson did not enter on his investigation under the bias of the presupposition which, in our time, is the grand secret of opposition to the Gospels—the alleged impossibility of the miraculous, and the consequently legendary character of all supernatural narratives. But he had a presupposition of his own, one childish if not absurd, which was equally fatal to anything like a fair and impartial study of the histories of the New Testament. Prophecy he regarded as "by far the most satisfactory, and the only lasting supernatural evidence of the truth of any revelation. To this the Jewish, to this the Christian, revelation, both appeal as the great criterion of their Divine origin and authority." Now, "God having by his

prophet Paul declared that Christians, of times succeeding the apostolic age, would apostatize from the original faith and doctrines of the Gospel; that many with ‘hardened hypocrisy’ would publish ‘lies;’ and that professed Christians in general would ‘turn away their ears from the truth and be turned unto fables;’ the veracity of the God of truth plainly demanded that lying fictions and fabulous scriptures should, at least, be joined unto the true and genuine records of the religion of the New Covenant. . . . That many, therefore, of those scriptures which form the most essential part of the canon of the apostate Church, must be fabulous and false, seems as certain as that the Word of God is true.” Starting from and with this most extraordinary theory, the only question to determine was, which of the scriptures received by the early Church were true, and which were fictitious and fabulous. Some there must be of both orders—so the argument ran—or the Word of God, the prophetic word, fails of its fulfillment! And, in his supreme wisdom, Mr. Evanson adjudged the Gospel by Luke to be true, and the greater part of the rest to be fictitious. Only, in the hands of another, the verdict might have been in favor of John and against Luke. And this is the beginning of the modern opposition to the genuineness of the fourth Gospel!

The first reply to Evanson’s challenge came from a quarter whence it might have been least expected. Dr. Priestley published “Letters to a Young Man,” in which he vindicated the three Gospels which the author of the “Dissonance” had rejected. Speaking specially of Evanson’s objections to the Gospel by John, he says: “Mr. Evanson finds much more to object to the Gospel of *John* than to that of *Mark*; nor do I wonder at it. There are many striking peculiarities in his Gospel; but all that can justly be inferred from this circumstance is that he is an original writer, and did not copy from any other, though antiquity says that he had seen the works of the other evangelists. On this account he has not many things in common with them, and when he does go over the same part of the history, he appears to me to have done it for the sake of greater exactness; for in all those cases he is remarkably circumstantial, as in the account of the feeding of the five



thousand, and of Peter denying his Master. These parts, as well as every other in his Gospel, bear more internal and unequivocal marks of being written by an eye-witness than any other writings whatever, sacred or profane. His view seems to have been, without directly saying that the other Gospels were not sufficiently exact, to relate the story in a more correct manner. But this is no impeachment of the veracity, or general good information, of the other evangelists" (Dr. Priestley's Works, vol. xx., p. 430). Dr. Priestley replies in detail, and with good effect, to the arguments of Evanson, many of which are almost contemptible. And more orthodox writers might study his defence of the fourth Gospel with advantage.

We cannot follow the history of the controversy respecting the fourth Gospel, nor is it necessary for our purpose that we should. But in reviewing it, two observations thrust themselves upon us:

First, the secret of the opposition to the fourth Gospel is to be found in a profound opposition to its Christ. "It is impossible nowadays," says Godet, "to conceal from ourselves the fact—the question of the *Johannine writing* is determined by another graver still, that of the *Johannine Christ*; and most frequently it is the latter which sways the solution of the former. Nothing can prevent the critic, whose inward feeling, for one reason or another, is repugnant to the Christ of John, from solving the question of the fourth Gospel in a way conformed to the secret wish of his antipathy; as, on the other hand, the author whose deepest and holiest aspirations are awakened on meeting with the figure of that same Christ, 'full of grace and truth,' will soon find in the lights proceeding from such profound sympathy, the solution of critical difficulties which have been declared insurmountable."—(*Commentary on John*, vol. i., p. xvii.)

Secondly, the mutual opposition of the critics who reject the fourth Gospel, and their frequent changes of opinion, show that there is some fallacy in their guiding principle,—prove rather that they have no true guiding principle. Apart from the negative principle that in no circumstances shall anything supernatural be



accepted as historical, every critic is "a law to himself." Within the limits just indicated, he is governed by his personal impression alone. He may be near-sighted, or far-sighted, or dim-sighted, or clear-sighted, logical or sentimental, mathematical or imaginative, he claims to sit in judgment on any book that is presented before him, without any doubt of his competence or infallibility. Thus, on the same data, critic differs from critic. To-morrow perchance they change places; but without any diminution of their self-confidence. And their conclusions, though variable as the images in the kaleidoscope, are boastfully set forth as "the conclusions at which modern criticism has arrived."—(For detailed illustration see Christlieb on *Modern Doubt*, etc., p. 395.)

In view of the evidence that proves that the fourth Gospel existed in the end of the first century, or beginning of the second, and that it was accepted by the contemporaries of the Apostle John as his writing, we can imagine only two grounds on which a rational doubt of its authorship can be based:

First, if the fourth Gospel should contain a fundamentally different representation of the person and work of the Christ from that which we find in the other three, in such a case either the three or the fourth must be rejected. The allegation is sometimes boldly made that such a difference exists, but it is utterly unfounded. Christ is as *human* in the fourth Gospel as in the three; and as *divine* in the three as in the fourth. Differences there are, for which we cannot be too thankful. It was impossible that one portrait of Christ should give an adequate representation of his wonderful individuality. The four, written, to use a modern phrase, from different standpoints, and with different aims, and by different hands, were necessary. But fundamental difference there is not. The very highest prerogatives claimed by Christ according to the fourth Gospel, were claimed by him according to the three. We even find instances in which Matthew, Mark, and Luke record assertions of high claims, which are not found in John. One of them, for example, tells how Peter on one occasion fell down at Jesus' knees, and said, in the spirit of Isaiah when he

beheld the glory of Jehovah, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, oh Lord;" and Jesus, instead of rebuking him, said in the spirit, and as with the authority, of the reply of Jehovah to Isaiah, "Fear not; for henceforth thou shalt catch men" (Luke 5 : 8-10). The three record, and John does not, how Jesus said to a paralytic, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee;" how he was charged with blasphemy because "none could forgive sins but God only;" and how he maintained his power and right as the Son of man to forgive sins (Matt. 9; Mark 2; Luke 5). Matthew alone records the words in which Christ represented himself to be the great and final judge of mankind: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations" (Matt. 25 : 31-46; see also Mark 7 : 38). Even in the Sermon on the Mount, which is occupied mainly with moral and spiritual teaching, Jesus declares that he shall at last occupy the judgment seat of the universe. The Christ of John's Gospel is the Christ of the Sermon on the Mount: the "Word made flesh" of John is the "Immanuel, God with us" of Matthew. "The Christ of the four Gospels is like the robe for which the soldiers cast lots, because it was without seam, and could not be distributed in parts. He is ONE."

SECONDLY.—Doubt might be thrown on the genuineness of the fourth Gospel, if it could be proved that there is a fundamental difference between its representation of the facts and manner of Christ's life and that which we find in the other three. But there is no such difference. Differences there are, and very marked. But they are more than reconcilable with the fundamental unity of the histories—they prove that unity. The three are mainly occupied with a Galilean ministry, but suggest or imply a Judæan. The fourth is mainly occupied with a Judæan ministry, but suggests or implies a Galilean. Without a Judæan ministry, there are references in the three which would be scarcely intelligible: without a Galilean ministry, there are references in the fourth which would be scarcely intelligible. Thus in Matt. 6 : 25 we read that there "*followed* him great multitudes of people from

Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judæa, and from beyond Jordan:" the most natural interpretation of which words, to say the least, is that Jesus had been in all these parts, and that from these parts many who had heard Him followed Him. In Mark 3 : 7 we have a similar statement, with the addition of Idumæa, and "about Tyre and Sidon." When Jesus went to the south of Judæa he was on the borders of Idumæa, and when he went to the northwest of Galilee, he was on the borders of Tyre and Sidon. "The fame of Him," which "went throughout all Syria," brought to Him many, probably from parts which He had not visited, in quest of healing. But this is scarcely sufficient to account for the statements of Matthew and Mark. And that Matthew must have known of a Judæan as well as a Galilean ministry, is evident from the fact that he records the words: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing, and ye would not." (Matt. 23 : 37.) These words cannot refer to the ministry of a few days before His death, of which all the four inform us, but must refer to earlier visits and ministries of which Matthew himself has preserved no history. In Luke we have references to incidents which we know by other means to have occurred near Jerusalem. Luke 10 : 25-37; Luke 10 : 38-42.

Turning to John, whose narrative refers mainly to the ministry of Christ in Judæa, we find the most explicit references to a ministry in Galilee. The reader has only to consult John 2 : 1, &c.; 4 : 3, 43-54; 6 : 1-71; 7 : 1.

But the representation we have made is short of the truth. It is unquestionable, as Luthardt puts it, that the fourth Gospel presupposes the historical material of the first three. (*St. John the Author of the Fourth Gospel*, ch. 9.) And not only so, critics must also own that it presupposes the Gospel history in the very way it is reported by the first three, and therefore presupposes these Gospel books. How John recognizes the historical basis

already existing in these books, can be clearly seen only by an examination of instances. One must suffice here. The remark in John 6:2, "A great multitude followed him, because they saw the miracles which he did on them that were diseased," implies (as the imperfect tense in the original of "he did" shows) a long-continuing period of miraculous working in Galilee. But of this period John gives no history—Matthew, Mark, and Luke do: John's words presuppose their historical recital. The result of an examination of instances of this sort is, that the author of the fourth Gospel not only is acquainted with, but owns and confirms, the first three, and founds his story on the known basis of theirs.

We are bold to maintain, then, that there is no ground on which doubt can be thrown on the evidence by which we have been brought to the conclusion, that the fourth Gospel belongs to the apostolic age as well as the other three. There is no fundamental difference between the representation of the person and work of Christ, and no fundamental difference between the facts and manner of Christ's life which we find in the fourth and that which we find in the others. Instead of occasion to doubt, a comparison of the four brings to light many corroborations of the truth of their common story and the genuineness of all the records. To some, indeed, the internal evidence of the Johannine authorship of the fourth Gospel is very much stronger than the external. But a volume would be required to show how innumerable internal indications converge on the conclusion that this Gospel was written by the disciple whom Jesus loved. Sanday,\* after an elaborate examination of every page of the Gospel, and of every question that has been raised by a comparison with the other Gospels, concludes: "This Gospel is the work of the Apostle, the son of Zebedee; it is the record of an eye-witness of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ; and its historical character is such as under the circumstances

\* "Authorship and Historical Character of the Fourth Gospel, considered in reference to the contents of the Gospel itself," p. 304. See also "The Doctrinal System of St. John, considered as Evidence for the date of his Gospel," by the Rev. J. J. Lias, M.A.

might be expected: it needs no adventitious commendation to make it higher."

Those who talk of the three Gospels and the fourth "mutually destroying each other," must be unconscious of the question which arises at once,—What then? All the Gospels destroyed, the Christ of the three is imaginary, and so is the Christ of the fourth. But they are two Christs, irreconcilable conceptions, according to the argument, and yet both very beautiful and wonderful personages. It follows that the three, or the people among whom they lived, were able to invent the wonderful character which they represent; and the fourth was, or the people among whom he lived were, able to invent the wonderful character which he represents. And the inventions took place almost simultaneously, by humble and illiterate Jews, and that in an age which, we are told, was dark and superstitious. Not only so—not only were these two wonderful Christs invented—but histories were invented, first by the three, then by the fourth, in which to enshrine and embody them; and these histories characterized by a simplicity and apparent truthfulness which deceived those who had the means of detecting their falsity, and have deceived the world ever since. Such are the moral impossibilities, or rather moral absurdities, to which we are reduced by the assertion that the three and the fourth Gospels destroy each other.

Reverting in conclusion to the fourth Gospel—if it was not written by John, we ask with Luthardt, "Who could have written it? The 'great unknown one' who has been suggested would have been too great to remain concealed. He would have stood out a head taller than all the great men of the second century. There is no room in the second century for such a mind. The literature of that century has an utterly different stamp from the fourth Gospel. The writings of the apostolic fathers stand in dependence upon the apostolic literature. Simply read the letter of Polycarp, who was such an honored chief in the Christian church of Asia Minor, and see what a great falling off there is. And the following literature

begins, with Justin, the age of theological reflection and of scientific digestion, which presupposes the age of the original production of Christian thoughts, and therefore a book like John's Gospel. Both the Gnosticism of the second century, and the contest against it, offer us an entirely different picture from the one the fourth Gospel presents. . . . The Gospel points to an earlier stage, a stage of first productivity and of original grandeur."

To the same effect Christlieb writes: "Did these writings, especially the Gospel of St. John, belong to 'unknown authors,' they would be a perfectly inexplicable phenomenon as compared with all the other products of the period. It has been well said, that it were no less absurd to ascribe the most inspiring writings of Luther to the spiritless period of the Thirty Years' War, than to transfer the Gospel of St. John to the middle of the second century. For, notwithstanding their warm Christian life, the writings of the second century evince such a remarkable dearth of new ideas, that one plainly sees how, after the spiritual flood-tide of the first century, the ebb had set in. Hence negative critics have been compelled again to raise the age of the Gospels, and to place them in the apostolic age, between 50 and 100 A. D."

## CHAPTER ELEVENTH.

### THE GOSPELS IN THE FIRST CENTURY, AND THEIR AUTHORS.

WE have now traced the Gospels to the first century—the apostolic age. That Matthew, Mark, and Luke, were written in that age few critics of any order now deny.\* Waiving at this point the question of authorship, and having respect only to the question of date, our conclusion, based mainly on the evidence of Irenæus and Justin Martyr, and on the historical inferences most certainly deducible from it, is that the three earlier Gospels were known from the beginning to have originated in the age to which Matthew, Mark, and Luke belonged; and that the fourth Gospel had descended from the age to which it is known that the life of John was prolonged; in other words, that these four Gospels existed and were received in the Christian Churches from the days of their several reputed authors. And this conclusion is further corroborated by the following considerations, some of which have been anticipated:—

The four  
Gospels in  
the first  
century.

1. There is nothing discoverable in the period during which we have no such express mention of the Gospels, as we find in Justin Martyr and in Irenæus—*i. e.*, in the earlier part of the second century, its first thirty or forty years—to throw the least doubt on our conclusion that the four Gospels existed, and that their apostolic origin was acknowledged in the Churches, at that time.

2. On the contrary, there is very much to support this conclusion—those incidental references which we have already noticed, and the uniform testimony of that age to the substance of the Gos-

\* Keim, the most reasonable of Rationalists, ascribes the Gospel by Matthew to about A. D. 66, the Gospel by Mark to about A. D. 100, and the Gospel by Luke to A. D. 90. Others of his school choose various and varying dates. Even as regards the Gospel by John, this school has had to retire step by step from Baur's calculation (A. D. 160) to the beginning of the second century, at which time John was probably still living, or, if not living, but very recently departed.



pels, their great facts, and their representation of the person of Christ and the character of his mission. This testimony, in fact, carries us right into the heart of the first century, through the letter of Clement to the Corinthians, a letter in which we see, as in a mirror, what the faith of the Church of Rome and the Church of Corinth had been from the beginning.

3. We cannot find a period during post-apostolic times at which

No later  
period  
possible.

it would have been possible to write these Gospels, without something, yea, without much, that should betray the age of their production. To say nothing of the impossibility of finding a period at which the Churches could be surprised into the belief that books of which they had never heard before, had really existed and been known to their predecessors from the beginning, our argument now is that the Gospels, if written in the middle or towards the end of the second century, would most certainly reflect the time of their production. The words of Meyer respecting the fourth Gospel are substantially true of all the four: "On the whole, the work is a phenomenon so sublime and unique among productions of the Christian spirit, that if it were the creation of an unknown author of the second century, it would be beyond the range of all that is historically conceivable. In its contents and tone, as well as in its style, which is unlike that of the earlier Gospels, it is so entirely without any internal connection with the development and literary conditions of that age, that had the Church, instead of *witnessing* to its apostolic origin, raised a *doubt* on that point, historical criticism would see assigned to it the inevitable task of proving and vindicating such an origin from the book itself. . . . After having stood the critical tests by Bretschneider and Baur, this Gospel continues to shine with its own calm inner superiority and undisturbed transparency, issuing forth victorious from never-ceasing conflicts; the last star, as it were, of evangelical history and teaching, yet beaming with the purest and highest light, which could never have arisen amid the scorching heat of Gnosticism, or have emerged from the fermentation of some Catholicizing process, but which rose rather on the horizon of the apostolic age, from the spirit of the disciple most intimate

with his Lord, and which is destined never again to set—the guidance to a true Catholicity, differing wholly from the ecclesiastical developement of the second century, and still remaining as the unattained goal of the future.”—(Meyer on *St. John*, i. 36, 37; see the quotations from *Luthardt* and *Christlieb*, pp. 131, 132.)

The principle of this argument holds good, as I have intimated, with reference to all the Gospels. There is not one of them which we can conceive it possible for the spirit of the post-apostolic age to have produced. The “apocryphal Gospels” belong, by universal acknowledgment, to that age; and their puerility and absolute opposition to the representation of Christ which we have in our FOUR, show what one class of thinkers, if they may be called thinkers, in that age, were capable of producing. The Gospel of Marcion, of which we know only that it was a mutilation of the Gospel by Luke, and that by implication, if not directly, it denied to Jesus either a proper humanity or a proper divinity, shows what the Gnosticism of the age would produce. And if we could imagine an anti-Gnostic writing a gospel in the second century, with a view to controvert Gnosticism, we have only to read Justin Martyr or Irenæus, to know the style and manner of argument which would pervade it. All the Gospels, and the Gospel by John especially, are anti-Gnostic,\* both in their facts and in their teachings, as was felt by the Gnostics, who rejected them, not because they were unapostolic, but because they were anti-Gnostic; but they could not have been written amidst the Gnostic controversies of the second century without bearing signs of the circumstances of their birth.

4. To this it may be added that we cannot find the man or men in the second century, or beyond the circle of the apostolic writers, who can for a moment be conceived capable of having written these four Gospels. The nearest to apostolic times is Clement of Rome. Or it would be still more correct to say that he lived and wrote *in* apostolic times. And his letter to the Corinthians is nearer in character and spirit

The apocryphal Gospels.  
The Gospel of Marcion.

No man in the second century capable of writing the Gospels.

\* See on this subject, “The Doctrinal System of St. John, considered as Evidence for the Date of his Gospel.” By the Rev. J. J. Lias, M.A.

to the apostolic writings than any other extant ancient Christian writing: But no one who reads that letter could for a moment suppose Clement capable of writing any of the four Gospels. Still less could the supposition be entertained respecting Ignatius or Polycarp, or Hermas, or Papias, or Justin, or Irenæus. Where shall we find the great unknown and unnamed author, contemporary with the latest of these writers, who wrote the works which are commonly ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John? He would not be the peer of his contemporaries, but absolutely peerless. And yet history has not preserved a whisper of his existence! More than this, we must find not one, but four men, altogether unlike their contemporaries, who hid themselves, or were hidden, in deep obscurity, and who sent forth, by hitherto undiscovered hands, from their obscurity, those precious four biographies of Jesus of Nazareth, which the world has from that time until now accepted as authentic histories. For it need scarcely be remarked that the Gospels could not have been written by one author. Each of them has a distinctiveness which necessitates a different authorship. So that any theory which ascribes the Gospels to post-apostolic men and a post-apostolic age, burdens us with the task of finding four Great Unknowns, of whom that diligent collector of books and histories, Eusebius, knew nothing, and of whom there is not a shadow of record in the writings of believers or unbelievers.

We turn now to the Gospels themselves, not to examine the internal evidence which they furnish of their authenticity, for that would require a volume, but to present some general observations respecting them, illustrative of their origin, and confirmatory of our conclusions.

1. It will not be denied that the story of Christ's life was—indeed must have been—first of all given to the world orally. This we learn from the Acts of the Apostles. And those who deny that the Gospels were written by the men whose names they bear, or in the age of those men, are doubly bound to admit the fact. Even if there were gospels older than ours,—

We turn to  
the Gospels  
themselves.

Christ's life  
published orally.  
Acts 26 : 26.

gospels that have vanished,—they were not the creators of the life of Christ; they were only its reporters. The life of Christ was emphatically a public life. It was lived in the face of day; its events and deeds were known to all the world. “I am persuaded,” Paul said before Agrippa and Festus, “that none of these things are hidden from [the king]; for this thing was not done in a corner.” For years after the death and departure of Christ, his disciples busied themselves in “proclaiming” what they had seen and heard. It was the task to which their discipleship called and bound them (Acts 8 : 4; 1 John 1 : 1–3). And the first churches in Judæa, Samaria, and Galilee, and many parts of the Gentile world, were founded on what was reported orally by the disciples, and on their interpretation of the facts thus reported.

2. No histories could gain credence with these Churches, that were not in general accordance with the notorious and widely published facts of the life and death of Jesus Christ. The third evangelist tells us that before he undertook his task, many had taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which were most surely believed among the Christians; even as these things had been “delivered” or given to the world by those who had been eye-witnesses of the life of Christ, and were now ministers of the word. He does not question the honesty and fidelity of these “many.” On the contrary, the design with which he credits them was to put in writing the things of which the Christians had an assured belief on the authority of the personal followers of Christ. And it is self-evident that any material discordance between the written story and the known facts, would at once have discredited the story and led to its rejection.

A written Gospel must agree with the oral. Luke 1 : 1–4.

If it be said—and it has been said—that the first Christians were not critical,\* and would or might accept histories without

\* Mr. Gladstone says truly that “the first law of theological criticism seems to be with many not far from this: that every question of history or creed, hitherto held affirmatively, and now admitted to examination, is to be determined in the negative.” (On “Ecce Homo”—*Gleanings*,

sufficient evidence, it is enough to reply that the first Christians were not fools. "The early Christians did not inquire," we are gravely told by a man of letters (Mr. J. A. Froude), "and therefore have left no record of inquiry." Did not inquire! The fact is, that they were eye-witnesses of what they reported and recorded. That "which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life, that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you" (1 John 1 : 1-3). This fact strikes at the root of all such antitheses as these—"The historical inquirer sees with the eye of reason; the early Christians saw with the eye of faith. The historical inquirer is impartial; the early Christian was enthusiastic and prepossessed." All of which is untrue. The "faith" of the early disciples of Christ, as known to us in history, did not produce or coin the facts which they recorded; the facts produced the faith. These disciples were not "prepossessed" in favor of the facts they recorded; it is notorious that their prepossessions were all the other way, so strongly, that when the fact on which they afterwards insisted, and in which they gloried, the death of their Lord, was first clearly announced to them, they exclaimed, through their usual spokesman, "God forbid!" They were equally unprepared for the great event of their Lord's resurrection, and needed "infallible proofs" to satisfy them of its reality. It is a discreditable violation of historical truth to say that Paul, "converted by a vision," "pointedly abstained from examining wit-

vol. iii., p. 43.) Words are often tyrannous and deceptive: they dominate those who use them, and deceive those who hear them. Of such words are "critic," "criticism," and "critical." The critic is by rights a "judge," and a judge is bound to decide by evidence. But those who now claim the title of critics *par excellence*, approach the great question of supernatural Christianity with a prejudgment of the case. They will not accept evidence in support of aught that is supernatural, because, they say, "the supernatural cannot be." To such men we deny the claim to be considered true critics. If they would "inquire" and judge "impartially," they must abandon their prepossessions, and let "evidence" determine whether the supernatural in Christianity is "historical" or not.

nesses or strengthening his conversion by outward testimony." The fact being, that St. Paul details with careful minuteness the "outward testimony," not his own, on which he asked the world to believe that Christ was risen indeed, and mentions his own testimony only as crowning that of those who had seen Christ in different circumstances: "and last of all he was seen of me also, as one born out of due time." Paul was neither credulous nor enthusiastic. It requires no profound historic insight, to discern in him a man, whose clear intellect and resolute will rendered it a moral necessity for him to get at the root and bottom of things. Even the impulsive Peter exhorted the Christians, "scattered" throughout many lands, to be ready always to give an answer (*ἀπολογία*) to every one that asked of them a reason for the hope that was in them. (1 Peter 3:15.) And his own *apologia* before the ruling Sadducees in Jerusalem, was offered in a spirit of the calmest reason. (Acts 4:1-12.) Paul and Peter may in this be accepted as types of the early Christians. That which they testified, and which others believed, was primarily a pure and simple fact. The faith of it was the overthrow of much in their opinions and sentiments and habits, which was strong as nature and dear as life; while it involved them in untold perils. And it was not enthusiasm, but a profound intelligent sense of their duty to God and man, that led them to say, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:20.)

All this applies to the acceptance of the books in which the story was written, as well as to faith in that story while yet unwritten. The facts, as reported by the "eye-witnesses" who first "proclaimed" them, were too sacred, and their issues too momentous, to make it possible for those who believed them, and found, or thought they found, eternal life in them, to accept as authentic histories, histories which were in any respect discordant with them.

3. We think we may add that no written history of Christ could have been accepted as authoritative that had not, at least, an apostolic imprimatur. It was known, and it is not denied now, that Christ had chosen certain men

The Gospels  
required  
apostolic  
sanction.



who had been His personal disciples throughout His public life, to represent Him and His claims and mission to the world. When one of these fell from his apostleship, the survivors were concerned that only one duly qualified should take his place. (Acts 1 : 16, *et seq.*) And they referred the decision of the matter to Christ himself, who, though no longer visibly among them, was believed to be cognizant of all they did and said. When at a later period another was called to the apostleship in an unexpected manner, his claims had to struggle with doubt because he had not been an eye-witness of the life of Christ. And throughout his life, illustrious as his Christian labors and conquests were, this doubt was used as a weapon against him by those who would make the Christian Church a Jewish sect, rather than a world-wide spiritual kingdom. The Apostle had the painful duty thrust upon him of defending his apostleship, and this he did, not for his own sake, but for the Gospel's sake. (1 Cor. 9 : 1, 2.) The history of Paul, the history of the opposition to him, shows the importance and authority that were attached to the apostleship in the primitive Church. And in view of it we conclude, that it was scarcely possible for a history of Christ to gain the confidence of the Churches without the sanction, direct or indirect, of an apostle. Such history might be in itself most credible, in perfect harmony with all that was known of Christ, but it could not claim to be authoritative. Let it be known, however, that a history was written by an apostle, or by one who had the confidence of an apostle, and this would be an immediate passport to acceptance as an "authorized version" of the life of the great Master.

4. If our four Gospels gained credence and acceptance with the first Christians—and we think we have established the fact that they did—the inference is obvious that their story was in general accordance with the facts of Christ's life as already certified by eye-witnesses, and already "surely believed" by the Churches; and further, that the recital of the story in these Gospels had the sanction, explicit or implicit, of some of the Apostles. This needs no further proof. The premises contains the conclusion.

Inference in  
favor of our  
Gospels.



How the "many" histories which had been written before that of Luke, speedily perished out of sight, and how the "four" were ultimately accepted to the exclusion of all others, may now be easily accounted for. We have only to suppose (1) the manifest superiority of the four.—or, we may say, of the three, for the "many" had disappeared before the fourth was written; and (2) the known authority of the sources from which the three had come. Assuming that the three were manifestly superior to all others, and assuming that it was known by whom the three were written, we have sufficient reason to account for the disappearance of all others; and more, for the fact that no indication has survived of there ever having been any rivalry between them. Indeed, the fact of their speedy disappearance, without, we may say, any attempt to retain an existence, may itself be accepted as evidence that the three possessed an authority which could not be claimed by any others. If the first was known to have been written by an apostle, and the second and third by companions of apostles—this alone would be held decisive of their exclusive claim, as, at that time, the only authoritative histories of the Lord Jesus Christ.

How  
"many"  
Gospels  
disappeared.

The date of the Gospels being determined, and their acceptance by those Churches which had the means of knowing by whom they were written, it would be of little consequence if all of them were anonymous, and if their authorship were quite unknown. Two of them are strictly anonymous. The third contains an indication of authorship, but without the name. The fourth purports to have been written by "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (chap. 21 : 23, 24). A few words about each.

They might  
be absolutely  
anonymous.

The first Gospel is perfectly anonymous. The author does not make the slightest allusion to himself as such. But the early Church ascribed it to the Apostle Matthew. And no other authorship was ever suggested. The general belief in the second century was that the Gospel by Matthew was originally written in Hebrew or Aramaic, the vernacular of Palestine at that time. And the probabilities of

The first  
Gospel  
anonymous.  
Ascribed to  
Matthew.

the case favor this belief. The first Gospel was evidently written from a Hebrew point of view, and sets forth Jesus as the Christ foretold by the Hebrew prophets. But if it was originally written in Hebrew, it was very soon translated into Greek, or reproduced in Greek, either by Matthew himself, or under the eye and by the authority of Matthew. The Aramaic was the language of Palestine, but Greek was a universal language, the language of the Jews themselves in their dispersion, as well as of other races of the civilized world. In the beginning of the second century, Papias, speaking of the Hebrew Matthew, says, that "every one interpreted it as he could." The tense which he employs (in "interpreted") shows that he speaks of a necessity that had once existed, but existed no longer (see Fisher's *Beginnings of Christianity*, p. 283).

The Hebrew Matthew, however, must not be confounded with "the Gospel according to the Hebrews," a book of which we have no trace till the end of the second century, and of which all trace is lost by the beginning of the fifth. This "Gospel according to the Hebrews" was possibly founded on the Gospel by Matthew, as the Marcionite Gospel was founded on that of Luke;—the former adapted to the opinions of the Ebionites, as the latter was to those of the Gnostics. But the true Matthew was as distinct from the one, as the true Luke was from the other.

The second Gospel is likewise anonymous; and the accounts of its authorship which have come down to us, by Irenæus and others, have been already quoted (see p. 55, 57, 60, 119). Papias of Hierapolis is called by Eusebius a companion of Polycarp, who was a disciple of the Apostle John. This Papias had known, at least, two of the immediate disciples of Christ—John, the presbyter or elder, a contemporary of the Apostle John at Ephesus, and Aristion; and possibly, not certainly, the Apostle John himself. He professes to have gathered information from two sources—first, the "elders," that is, those who had seen Jesus; and secondly, their pupils or followers. In a fragment, quoted by

Perhaps  
written in  
Hebrew.  
A Greek ori-  
ginal.

Not to be  
confounded  
with "The  
Gospel  
according to  
the  
Hebrews."

The second  
Gospel  
anonymous.

Eusebius, Papias says, "and the elder (the presbyter John) said this: 'Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately whatever he remembered, not, however, in order (*ἐν ῥάξει*), what was either said or done by Christ. For neither did he hear the Lord, nor did he follow Him; but, afterwards, as I said, he [followed or attended] Peter, who adapted his instructions to the needs [of his hearers], but not as designing to furnish a connected account (*σύνταξιν*) of the Lord's oracles; so that Mark made no mistake while thus writing down some things, as he remembered them. For of one thing he took care—to omit nothing which he heard, and not to set down any false statement therein.'" Such, adds Eusebius, is the relation of Papias concerning Mark. In saying that Mark "did not record in order what was either said or done by Christ," Papias probably had in his mind the statement of Luke—that it had seemed good to him (Luke) "to write in order" those things, from the very first, of which he had perfect understanding. In contrast with this, the characteristic of the Gospel of Mark was, that it was in substance a rehearsal of what the Apostle Peter was wont to relate of the works and words of Christ. This may not have been a literally accurate explanation of the origin and character of the second Gospel. But Irenæus, likewise, tells us that after the death of Peter and Paul, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, "gave to us in writing what had been uttered by Peter in his preaching." And these statements point to, at least, some substantial connection between the Gospel by Mark and the preaching of the Apostle Peter.

The third Gospel refers to its own authorship, but does not mention the name of its author. But Irenæus says, "Luke, the companion of Paul, put down in writing the Gospel preached by him." And internal evidence points conclusively to the "beloved physician" as the author of the third Gospel, and of that which is avowedly a continuation of the third Gospel, the Acts of the Apostles. (1) The author was not one of the Apostles, but one of their immediate disciples (chap. 1 : 2, 3). (2) He seems to have been not a Jewish, but a Gentile Christian;

The third  
Gospel—  
authorship  
indicated.

or, at least, wrote specially for Gentiles. A Gentile Christian was more likely to speak of the elders of the Jews (7 : 3), and of a city of the Jews (13 : 51). John, it is true, uses similar language. But this is accounted for by the fact, that he wrote long after Jerusalem was laid in ruins, and when the Jews had no longer a land of their own. (3) The author of the third Gospel and of the Acts was imbued with the characteristic principles of Paul. His tone and spirit, and the peculiar contents of the Gospel, are what we should expect in one who had attended the ministry of Paul to the Gentiles. This position is universally allowed. (4) He must have been one of the Apostle Paul's fellow-laborers in his Gentile missions. The narrative in the Acts moves on, as we should expect of a historian who has derived his information from oral or written sources, until the Apostle arrived at Troas (Acts 16 : 10), when there is a sudden transition to the first person plural—"immediately *we* endeavored to go into Macedonia." It further follows from this that he cannot have been one of the fellow-laborers of Paul who are designated by name in the Acts, for the author of the Acts never speaks of himself except in the anonymous "*we*." (5) The author of these two books must have been a man of letters. "This is proved by the prologue prefixed to his work, the classic style of this piece, as well as of those passages of the Acts which he composed independently of any document—the last part of the book ; finally, by the refined and delicate complexion of mind, and the historical talent which appears in his two books."—*Godet on Luke*, vol. ii. 417.

All these features belong to Luke, and to no other that is known to us. (1) Paul ranks Luke among the Christians of Greek origin. (2) He assigns him a distinguished place within the circle of his disciples and fellow-laborers. (3) Luke is not mentioned by name in the book of the Acts. (4) The title, physician, which Paul gives him, suggests his possession of a literary culture probably superior to that of the other apostolic helpers.

"There is no work of classical antiquity," says Dr. Fisher, "whose genuineness would be doubted for a moment, if it were sustained by evidence equal in amount to that which we have presented in behalf

of Luke.”—“*Beginnings of Christianity*,” p. 292. Few rationalistic critics, even, now dispute the authorship of the third Gospel and of the Acts. “The author of this Gospel,” says Renan, “is certainly the same as the author of the Acts of the Apostles. Now, the author of the Acts is a companion of Paul, a title which perfectly applies to Luke.” Keim says, “There can be no doubt that the book was composed by the Apostle Paul’s fellow-worker. At least it is not conceivable that mere surmise should have fastened on a name which occupies a position by no means prominent in the Roman Epistles of the Apostle.”—Keim, I. p. 111.

As to the fourth Gospel, while the author is not expressly named, he is clearly indicated. After the narrative of the appearance of Jesus to certain disciples, among whom were the sons of Zebedee (21 : 2), at the Sea of Galilee, and Peter’s question about “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (ver. 20), we read, “This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things : and we know that his testimony is true” (ver. 24). This is now commonly regarded as an endorsement, an independent attestation, of the Gospel and its authorship. If not written by the author himself, it was written by those who knew him. There is no reason to doubt that it is as old as the Gospel itself. If there be any truth in the story that John was urged by his fellow-disciples in Ephesus, exiled like himself from the land which Jesus had honored by His presence, but which was now desolate under the vengeful power of Rome, to commit to writing the precious things which they had often heard from His lips, these may have been the authors of the last verses of the Gospel : they may have felt themselves called on to bear testimony to his authorship. But possible as this is, we attach no argumentative importance to the conjecture. The authorship of the book is tacitly implied, or at least suggested, throughout. At the very beginning we read : “One of the two which heard John [the Baptist] speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother.” Why is not the other of the two named ? What other reason than because he who was writing the narrative was John himself ? “Is this the mode which a *falsarius*

The fourth Gospel—authorship asserted.

John 21 : 24, 25—by whom written ?

Authorship implied or suggested throughout.

who wished to palm off his book as the work of John would adopt to secure his end? It would not only be contrary to all precedent in apocryphal literature; it would be contrary to nature."

"Through the whole fourth Gospel," says Hase, "while the Apostle John is never named, there moves an unnamed, as it were, veiled form, which sometimes comes forward, yet without the veil being entirely lifted. It is inconceivable that the author should not have known, or did not care to know, who this disciple was, whom Jesus loved, who at the last Supper leaned upon his breast, who with Peter followed after Jesus when he was taken by the soldiers, who received his mother as a legacy from him, who again with Peter first hurries to the grave of the Risen One. There must therefore be some special relation of the author to this person; there must have been a reason for not naming him. How natural to suppose that he designates himself with that name which expresses the highest contents and the whole joy of his life, as 'that disciple whom Jesus loved.' The objection of Weisse, that this would have been an arrogant assumption, shows that he has not entered into that joyous pride, mingled with all humility, which grows out of the consciousness of having been loved, without desert on his part, by Him who is the object of his own supreme love. In the synoptical Gospels also, John appears, in connection with Peter, as an intimate and trusted disciple; he is reckoned by Paul among the 'pillar' apostles, the heads of the Church at Jerusalem; in the Ephesian tradition he is 'the disciple who leaned on the breast of the Lord.'"—(*Hase on the Fourth Gospel*, quoted by Fisher, p. 349.)

One most noticeable fact connected with the authorship of the Gospels must not be overlooked, and that is, the writers' unconsciousness of self in authorship. It might be said that they are unconscious of their own unconsciousness. John, indeed, could not forget, as his narrative moved along, from the hour when he heard the Baptist say, "Behold the Lamb of God," to the hour when he heard his Lord answer Peter's question, "What shall this man do?" that he was relating events which he



had witnessed with his own eyes, and in which he had taken part. But his self-consciousness is betrayed only by the avoidance of his own name. And this properly is not the consciousness of authorship. As an author he utterly forgets himself, as they all do. And they forget themselves not by an act of conscious humility, such as might say, "He must increase, but we must decrease," or such as might say, "What are we but ministers by whom the Gospel is written?" Their self-forgetfulness was far more absolute than this. It is not by an effort that they hid themselves. It did not seem to occur to them that they had any place of their own in their own work. He of whom they wrote must be all in all. They must not appear even in the background. Conscious only of the august presence of their Lord, and of his glory as the Alpha and Omega of their history, they are themselves as if they were not.

And yet these books of theirs are the world's greatest treasure. Their place in the world's literature is unique. It is not too much to say that the world's life is in them, and the world's future. But this not because of their authorship, but because of their theme. Christ is the Life and Light of man.



## CHAPTER TWELFTH.

### THE MUTUAL RELATIONS OF THE EVANGELISTS, AND THEIR SOURCES OF INFORMATION.

THE question of the independence or interdependence of the Gospels relates only to the three. Among those who have held the interdependence of these three, there have been all possible varieties of opinion on the question of priority. The hypothesis which placed Matthew first and Mark the latest, with Luke between them, had for a long time a wide acceptance. Mark was regarded as the product of an abridgment of the older narratives. But more thorough investigation has proved this hypothesis to be unfounded. The narratives in Mark have only to be examined to show that they are not abbreviations of the narratives in the others. They are often longer and more minute. Let the reader compare the healing of the paralytic, as related in Matthew 9 : 2-8, and in Mark 2 : 3-12; the healing of the demoniac, as related by the three evangelists (Matt. 17 : 14-21; Mark 9 : 14-29; Luke 9 : 37-43); and how the three evangelists write of Herod and John the Baptist (Matt. 14 : 1, 2, 6-12; Mark 6 : 14-16, 21-29; and Luke 9 : 7-9).

There are many other evidences of Mark's independence. If he had the other Gospels before him, or at least if he used them as the basis of his own, why should he have omitted the earlier history of our Lord and so much else—the Lord's discourse, for example—which they contain? There are many divergences from Matthew which would be unaccountable on the supposition that Mark had Matthew before him when he wrote. And in Mark there are graphic touches, and a rapid, lively style, which prove him to be no copyist, but an original writer.

The independence of Mark, as related to the other Gospels, is,

as Dr. Fisher says (*Beginnings of Christianity*, p. 275), one of the most assured and most valuable results of recent criticism. And the question now arises whether the second Gospel had a direct influence upon the composition of the first and third. There is certainly no internal evidence in Matthew and Luke of any dependence on Mark. And there is abundant internal evidence that the first and third Evangelist wrote from standpoints very different from that of the second, and incorporated in their works materials which he did not possess, or which he passed by. And Matthew and Luke are manifestly as independent of each other as they both are of Mark. The three have the same great person, the same great life, the same great events to deal with. And, consequently, there is a fundamental unity in their histories. But consistently with this unity, there are diversities which can have resulted only from their entire independence, and from their aiming subordinately at different ends.

Independence of Matthew and Luke.

There has been much groundless and profitless theorizing on the subject of the sources from which the Evangelists derived their information. The hypothesis once was that there was a *primitive written Gospel*, which furnished to each of the Evangelists the matter which is common to them all. This primitive Gospel was supposed to have been written in Aramaic, the current dialect of Palestine, and soon translated into Greek. But Luke evidently knew nothing of any such authoritative document. And no ancient writer gives any sign of having ever heard of it.

The sources of the Gospels.

Instead of a *primitive written Gospel*, others have held, and still hold, the theory of a *primitive oral Gospel*—a common stock of oral narrative from which each of the Evangelists drew. “This body of narrative, it is supposed, formed itself by the necessity under which the Apostles were placed of instructing their converts, and the first preachers of the new faith, with respect to the life and teachings of the Lord. The union of the Apostles at Jerusalem, and the natural tendency, which is specially

A primitive oral Gospel?

strong among the unlettered, to give a stereotyped form to narratives which are frequently rehearsed, caused the Gospel story to be repeated, to a great extent, in the same phraseology. At the same time differences would exist according to the varying recollections of individuals who had occasion to relate the history of Jesus, and to make it known to converts in different places. In addition to a common stock of narrative, persons might become separately possessed of information peculiar to themselves. Hence, when the Gospels of the canon were composed, there was a main trunk, as it were, ramifying into distinct branches."

This hypothesis is said to have the merit of taking into view both the agreement and the diversity which co-exist in the synoptical histories. But it is quite unnecessary, and only complicates a subject about which there is no mystery. How the Apostles could have unitedly framed a consecutive narrative of the life of Christ, and committed it, without writing, to the memory of their disciples, it is difficult to imagine. A united written work is conceivable, a united oral work is not. But we need no hypothesis to explain the matter. The general facts of Christ's life, as we have seen, were known to all the world. His conversations and discourses were heard by many disciples who, although they failed to understand them thoroughly, so appreciated them that they could say, as one of them did on a memorable occasion: "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." The words of Christ were not only treasured in individual memories, but must have been the subject of frequent recital and discussion. Many of them, moreover, may have been committed to writing for safer keeping by those who prized them. The disciples, even those of them who had been fishermen, were not, in the proper sense of the word, "ignorant" men, although they were "unlettered and private persons" (Acts 4:3); and the art of writing was not confined to professional "scribes." The supposition that they "took notes" of much that they had heard from the lips of their Lord, is in no respect fanciful or improbable. Rather would it be a strange thing if they did not use all available means for preserving words which struck not them alone, but the

The hypothesis is unnecessary.

common multitude, as words of wisdom and authority such as the most trusted Rabbi did not possess. When Luke undertook the task of collecting and setting forth in order the words and works of Christ, there is no difficulty in believing that the materials within his reach were abundant. As the companion of Paul, he was in possession of all the facts that were known to his master, and which must have been the subject of his master's conversation. During Paul's lifetime he had opportunities of seeing Apostles and other disciples in Jerusalem. And we have only to suppose that after the death of Paul he made it his business to acquire from "the eye-witnesses, and ministers of the word," the information which he desired.

We make no appeal to the inspiration or Divine guidance, which, as Christians, we believe the Evangelists enjoyed. Our concern with them at present is simply as historians. No appeal to inspiration. John 14:26. And in whatsoever way the Divine Spirit operated on their minds, it did not supersede the exercise of their own faculties, and the necessity of research—as is evident from the terms in which Luke describes his own work as a historian. Once admit a Divine inspiration, and you have security that the history shall be strictly and entirely true, and you also have the explanation—an explanation, at least, of their selection of materials and of the adaptation of their writings, as we see it now, to the ends which Divine wisdom contemplated. But our only concern at present is with the human part of the process. The human part of the process. We need not hold that any of the deeds or discourses of Christ were "revealed" to Luke. He may have gained his knowledge of them as any other historian might have done, and any difficulty he felt would arise not from a paucity but a redundancy of materials. And what is true of Luke is equally true of Matthew and Mark, with this difference, that, in the case of Matthew, he was an eye-witness and hearer of much that he records.

There are facts reported in the opening pages of Matthew and Luke the knowledge of which must have come directly or indirectly from the mother of our Lord. Facts known only to Mary. There is no

indication in the Gospels that any one knew the great secret of the way in which Jesus was born. "I believe it was entirely unknown to the nation at large—unknown to the Twelve—unknown to his own family circle—unknown (I think) to all save his virgin mother and her husband Joseph. Do you ask why such secrecy? Why, just suppose it had been noised abroad through the little town of Nazareth that the betrothed wife of just and decent Joseph had become a mother before her marriage, and that he, instead of giving her a bill of divorcement, had taken her to wife as if nothing had happened, where would the reputation of either have been at Nazareth? . . . I believe that in the high wisdom that presided over every step in this matchless life, it was provided that, for a considerable time, only his virgin mother and his supposed father should know how 'unto us a child was born, unto us a Son was given, whose name should be called Wonderful, the mighty God.'

"It was divinely intended that man's convictions of the sinlessness of our Lord should, in the first instance, be grounded, not on the manner of His birth, but on the patent facts of His life, His teaching, and His works; and that when at length they come to learn in what manner He came into the world, they should see in this merely the proper explanation, the all-sufficient key to what would otherwise have defied explanation—showing the high, the unique sense in which He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and—what could be said of no other man—separate from sinners, yet partaker of their nature. Now, the Gospels are just a record of those facts of His life which prove Him to be this—not that they were written to prove it. The Synoptic Gospels bear not the slightest evidence of their having been written to establish this or any other doctrinal position. They are not preaching histories, but an unvarnished relation of facts; and hence it is, I have not the least doubt, that, in narrating the facts of His public life just as they occurred, they never go back upon His miraculous conception as furnishing the original basis for such a life."—Dr. David Brown, article on "*The Miraculous Conception of our Lord*," in *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, July, 1879.

As to the manner in which the story of our Lord's birth is told, and the authenticity of the narrative, Godet well remarks: "What exquisite delicacy this scene displays! What simplicity and majesty in the dialogue! Not one word too many; not one too few. A narrative so perfect could have emanated only from the holy sphere within which the mystery was accomplished. A later origin would inevitably have betrayed itself by some foreign elements."

We can be at no loss to conjecture how the facts touching the birth of Jesus Christ came at last to be known. "When Jesus was glorified," His mother found a home with the disciple whom Jesus loved. Mary and John were henceforth bound together as no mother and son had ever been before. How their hearts must have burned within them as "they spoke often one to another" of the wonderful past, which neither of them fully understood till it was past, and was illumined by the Divine light of Pentecost. The life of labor and poverty in Nazareth; the public life, still of poverty, though of Divine beneficence; Gethsemane; Pilate's bar; the Cross; the crown of thorns; the grave; the resurrection; the ascension;—what a retrospect! In this strange history, still the world's wonder and joy, they saw the very heart of God revealed to men. Mary's tongue was now unloosed. The time had come for revealing those things which she had long hidden in her heart. If an earlier disclosure of them would have provoked idle wonder, doubt, and doubtful disputation, to have concealed them now would have left much of the life and work and character of Jesus forever unexplained.

Made known  
through  
John.

Why not  
made known  
sooner.

John, we suppose, was the medium through which the facts known only to Mary were made known to the outer world of the disciples. But when he wrote his Gospel, it was not needful that he should repeat the story; it had already been published by Matthew and Luke. The best critics of all schools believe that the three Gospels were in the possession of the writer of the fourth. And it was no longer necessary that he should explain the manner in which the eternal "Word was made flesh." Neander seems right in supposing that, in saying "The word was made flesh," the



Apostle John must have meant that He did so, not as all other descendants of Adam do, but in a way which, by this time, was well understood by all Christians; in fact, that in using this sublime expression, "became flesh," he consciously leaned upon the synoptic record of His birth to explain it.

What special means of information the Apostle John had respecting the life and words of his Lord need not be explained. John's means of information. He was one of the first called to follow Christ, and he was with Him to the last. What means he took—or whether he took any, such as we should take—to preserve the memory of his Lord's words, we do not know. But we may be sure that these words were often repeated by him to devout and eager listeners, and had thus been engraven on his mind long before they were given to the world in his Gospel. The speciality of Christ's discourses in the fourth Gospel may be explained in part by the fact that John was supplementing what his predecessors, the other three evangelists, had already written; but still more by the fact that he was personally the fittest medium for preserving and publishing those which we owe to his pen. Although Matthew heard them as well as John, the idiosyncrasy of the two men explains, without any miracle, how the one should not have written them, and how the other should. It was thus left fittingly to John to preserve most fully the testimony which Christ bore to His own person. "Why should it be incredible," writes Mr. Gladstone, "or even strange, that of any teaching whatever, much more than of such marvellous teaching as our Lord's, some elements should pass more easily into some minds, and others into other minds of a different complexion or affinity? The disciple 'whom Jesus loved' has given us the fullest and deepest picture of His love, of His person. But it has been justly remarked, that there are scattered over the pages of the Synoptics a certain number of passages which are in precise correspondence with the general strain of St. John."—On "*Ecce Homo*;" *Gleanings*, vol. iii. p. 61.

The materials for a life of Christ were, we now perceive, within



the easy reach of any diligent and devout inquirer. Of any four men studying them independently, and framing out of them a history for publication, it is inevitable that their four histories should differ much from each other. Let these four men differ, the one from the other, as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, evidently did; let their personal relations to the subject of their histories differ; let the associations with which they are surrounded differ; let the readers for whom they specially write differ; and we shall most certainly find all the diversity and variety of result with which we are now familiar in the four Gospels—a diversity and variety which, while it does not discredit the work of any one of the four, supplies evidence of the truth of the great story which underlies and runs through them all—evidence which it is difficult to imagine how it could be stronger.

How diversity must arise.

Some commentators, it seems to me, wrong the Gospels, magnifying one over another—sometimes one, sometimes another—by ascribing certain differences to the better “sources” which it is supposed one had access to now and another then. They are all trustworthy; and they should be compared only for the purpose of throwing their different and combined lights on the great subject of which they treat. As to their real and substantial harmony, Dr. Milman has said wisely: “The best answer to Strauss is to show that a clear, consistent, and probable narrative can be formed out of that of the four Gospels, without more violence, I will venture to say, than any historian ever found necessary to harmonize four contemporary chronicles of the same events; and with a general accordance with the history, customs, habits, and opinions of the times, altogether irreconcilable with the poetic character of mythic history.” (*History of Christianity*, vol. i. p. 121.)

Error of commentators.

The unity of the Gospel record is illustrated by Dr. Gerard Uhlhorn in these carefully weighed words: “The Gospels are not four photographs; they are rather four living reproductions of the image of Jesus. No lifeless machine has given us a copy of Jesus; but living men have told us what they heard and saw of the Word

of life. These men differ in their individual characters ; and though the Holy Spirit who influenced them purified their individuality, he by no means suppressed it. Matthew remained Matthew, and John, John. The image of the Lord was reflected in each one according to his peculiar character ; and since no man is able to take and give the whole fullness of the life that is in Jesus Christ, the Providence that rules the church gave her, not one Gospel, but four, or, to speak more correctly, ~~from~~ the ancient church, one Gospel in a fourfold form."

## CHAPTER THIRTEENTH.

### CONCLUSION.

WE have traced our Gospels from the days when pagan philosophers and rulers took counsel against them to root them out of the earth, to the very days when they were first given to the world—the days of the generation that were eye-witnesses of the life of our Lord. That vast numbers of copies were destroyed in the Diocletian persecution is a matter of history, although it is equally a matter of history that very many Christians were content to surrender their lives rather than surrender what was dearer than life. Some may be surprised by the estimates of Tregelles and others (p. 78) that there could not be fewer than 60,000 copies of the Scriptures in the possession of the Christian Church in the middle of the second century. But let it be remembered that Christianity was then in the full career of conquest, and a century later it had conquered an immense portion of the Roman Empire. “The Kingdom of Heaven had attained a numerical census which is very variously calculated. Naturally, the proportion of Christendom and heathendom differed greatly in different regions.” Some assign to the Church a twentieth part of the population, some even one-half.

The proportion of heathens and Christians in the time of Diocletian.

“There was not a man in all Alexandria, whose son or daughter, brother or bosom friend, was not a Christian.” The wife and daughter of Diocletian himself were Christians, and so were the greater part of his royal household. Dean Milman says—“If it be impossible to form the most remote approximation to their relative numbers with that of the pagan population, it is equally erroneous to estimate their strength and influence by numerical calculation. All political changes are wrought by a compact, organized, and disciplined minority.” “But even if the Church,” says Mason in his history of the Diocletian persecution, “could not claim equality with paganism in

Moral and intellectual strength of Christianity.

the matter of numbers, there were other points besides that of positive faith and energetic zeal in which she could hold her own. Intellectual and literary power was fast passing over from the heathen side." "Nor were the adventitious goods of fortune lacking to the Church. The old buildings in which the Christians of earlier and humble days had met were now too strait and too plain to suit the multitudes of rich and poor who flocked to worship there. Splendid churches were erected everywhere. It is plain in Lactantius that the old Emperor's love for architecture, as well as his far-sighted policy, made him shrink from destroying the mighty cathedral of Nicomedia, which towered upon an eminence in full sight of his own palace windows."

In these circumstances—the Christian churches numbered by thousands; their temples numbered by thousands; their wealthy adherents, proud of having libraries of their own, and sparing no cost to acquire them, numbered by thousands—we may regard it as a certainty that the number of copies of the Divine Scriptures, belonging to churches and to individuals, was immense. And all the zeal of Galerius could not rob the world of the treasure which God had bestowed on it.

In the end of the last century we read of a literary party in the house of the father of the famous Sir Ralph Abercromby, at which the question was put: Supposing all the New Testaments in the world had been destroyed at the end of the third century, could their contents have been recovered from the writings of the three first centuries? The question was novel to all, and no one even hazarded an answer (*Memoirs of the Haldanes*, p. 557). Two months after, Lord Hailes, a Scottish judge, who was present, made the following statement to an Edinburgh clergyman (Dr. Walter Buchanan): "On returning home, as I knew I had all the writers of those centuries, I began immediately to collect them that I might set to work on the arduous task as soon as possible. I have been busy for those two months, searching for chapters, half chapters, and sentences of the New Testament, and have marked down what I found, and where I found it, so that any person may examine and see for himself. I have actually dis-

covered the whole New Testament except seven (or eleven) verses, which satisfies me that I could discover these also."

It does not follow from this, even if Lord Hailes's reckoning was correct to the letter, that it would be possible to reconstruct the New Testament out of the materials which his industry collected. The great facts and doctrines of the Christian faith could be ascertained by means of them. But the books themselves could never be restored. Ten thousand quotations, often most fragmentary, and with "no chapter and verse" to indicate whence they were taken, could never be made to fit into their place, and thus remake the histories and epistles to which they originally belonged. But the statement of Lord Hailes helps to give us some idea of the extent to which the writings of the Nicene fathers—those of them which have survived, for a very large portion of them, perhaps the larger, have perished—are saturated with scriptural quotations. For example, in the "index of texts" to a modern translation of Irenæus now before me, I find no fewer than 765 texts quoted or referred to by this Father alone. We have thus incontrovertible evidence of the early existence and wide-spread diffusion and acceptance of the New Testament Scriptures.

Some caskets are more precious than the jewels they contain; some, much adorned and very costly, contain only that which is worthless; they seem made for themselves, not for their contents. But it is not so with the Gospels. The Gospels precious because of their Christ. They are precious because of the Christ whom they enshrine. In none of them is this Christ the mere man. Matthew introduces Him as "Immanuel, God with us." Mark introduces Him as "the Son of God." Luke tells how the father of John the Baptist said to his son, "Thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord." John introduces his Jesus as the Eternal Word made flesh. In all of them this Christ is represented as claiming, sometimes expressly, sometimes implicitly, prerogatives which no man had ever claimed or could claim without subjecting himself to a charge of blasphemy or of insanity. And in all of them He is represented as working

miracles which were not only signs that "He was sent of God," but were manifestations of His personal "Glory."

But that which thus renders the Gospels precious beyond all price, is a stumbling-block to some. They "will not" have the Christ whom they set forth; their philosophy requires them to limit their beliefs to the natural; and their philosophy is more to them than the Gospels. The "supernatural" in the Christ of the Gospels and in His life, is not to be admitted on any terms. We have seen, however, that even if our Gospels were proved to have been written in a post-apostolic age, if they were proved to be not the Gospels which Justin Martyr describes and from which he quotes largely,—the Gospels from which he did quote, and which on this supposition are the earliest known to us, contained the same supernatural representation of Jesus of Nazareth with which Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John have made us familiar. We have seen, too, that Paul bears testimony to the beliefs of the Christians respecting their Master, which carries us back to within three or five years of the death of Christ. And in these beliefs Christ appears the same God-man as he appears in the Gospels.

The wildest, the most unhistorical explanation which has been adventured, of the change which some suppose to have taken place from a superlatively wise, but still purely human, Rabbi, to a divinely commissioned and personally Divine Christ, is that which ascribes it to the Apostle Paul. This marvellous man, <sup>Paul and Christianity.</sup> we are asked to believe, although he had never seen Jesus—or, if he had, only as a reviling Pharisee—and had become a convert only some years after Jesus had disappeared from the world, was able, by his genius or great force of superstition, absolutely and wholly to revolutionize that faith which originated in the simple teachings of the Nazarene, if faith indeed it could be called; and, instead of it, to give to the world, and to summon the world to accept, an entirely new thing, and that avowedly on the authority of the Jesus whom he was audaciously superseding! And this he did without protest of any kind from those who knew that he was betraying his master!

If we could imagine this possible, we should stumble at once on

the question, how came Peter and John, original disciples of Jesus—who, according to the critics with whom we have now to deal, were all their lifetime opposed to the Pauline Gospel—to hold views of their Master and His work substantially one with those of Paul? This question cannot be evaded by denying or doubting the genuineness of the Gospel and Epistles of John. It is admitted that he wrote at least the Apocalypse. The most determined denier, in these times, of the Johannine authorship of the fourth Gospel, believes that the Apocalypse was written by the Apostle John, and that as early as about A. D. 68. Speaking of this book, he says, “It possesses the greatest value as an indication of John’s views;” and, “If it be merely regarded as a contemporary writing, it still is most interesting as an illustration of the religious feeling of the period.” All which is an admission that those exalted views of the supernatural person and mission of Christ which pervade the Apocalypse from beginning to end, were held by the most intimate and privileged of Christ’s personal followers and by the Christians of the apostolic period. How came this to pass? Were Peter and John and the other Apostles so fascinated by this Saul of Tarsus, this disciple of Gamaliel, whom they never saw till three years after his conversion, and then only for fourteen days, that they lost not only their conscience but their memory and intellect, and came to believe that they had heard Jesus speak words which he never spoke and had seen works which He never performed; and to believe at the same time that He whom they knew as the lowliest of men, and the godliest, and who, if only a man, must have sedulously guarded them against giving Him honor more than was due to man, was after all God manifest in the flesh?

What of  
Peter and  
John?

The Apoca-  
lypse.

The author  
of “Super-  
natural  
Religion.”

Such a theory, if theory it may be called, could originate only in the “credulity of skepticism,” and in an *à priori* repugnance to the Divine claims of Christ and the true character of His mission as a Redeemer. With us the Divine Christ and the historic Gospels go together. They are our joy and the world’s hope. Some dream that the moral principles

The  
credulity of  
skepticism.



taught by Christ have so incorporated themselves in our civilized humanity, that their power can never be lost, and that the moral impulse which humanity has received from Christ can never be lost, even if Christ himself should be forgotten. This is a dream, a phantasy, and nothing more. What Christ said of Christian disciples is true of Christian ethics: "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me" (John 15 : 4). His ethics have derived the power which has distinguished them above all others, not merely nor chiefly from their moral superiority, but from himself—from faith in himself as the world's Redeemer and Lord. It was not by the morals of the Sermon on the Mount that Christ became the spiritual regenerator of the ancient world. And the history of Christianity in our own times is full of evidence that it is not the ethics of our faith, but its redeeming love, that first touches the heart of man, whether civilized or uncivilized, and makes him a new creature. Let Christ be eliminated from our Christianity, and whatever beauty or virtue may still remain, it will soon suffer the doom which has befallen many things else—it will be cast forth as a branch that is withered (John 15 : 6).

In defending the Gospels we feel as Erasmus did when he gave to the world in printed form the precious Greek, to which few of his generation had access. "If the footprints of Christ are shown us in any place," he said, "we kneel down and adore them. Why do we not rather venerate the living and breathing picture of him in these books? We deck statues of wood and stone with gold and gems for the love of Christ. Yet they only profess to represent to us the outward form of his body, while these books present us with a living picture of his holy mind. . . . I wish that even the weakest woman might read the Gospels and the Epistles of St. Paul. . . . I long for the day when the husbandman shall sing portions of them to himself as he follows the plough, when the weaver shall hum them to the tune of his shuttle, when the traveller shall while away with their stories the weariness of his journey."

It is not without reason that we magnify our Gospels and thank God for their preservation unto this hour.

But not in the interest of the unlearned alone, but equally in the interest of the learned and the wise, do we defend the Gospels of our Lord. The condition of the world, outside the faith of Christ, is no better now than it was eighteen centuries ago, when the Christian apostle declared boldly, in the face of the philosophers of Greece, that the world's wisdom had failed to find out God. In the department of physical science, and in those arts of which science is the creator or minister, the world is new. But in the department of the spiritual and divine, positive religious results there have been none. System after system has arisen and blazed proudly for a season, only to go out in the darkness whence it came, like the *ignis fatuus*. The deathbed cry of Goethe, "More light," is still heard. And the answer to the cry is to be found in the Gospels. Jesus Christ is "the light of the world." And this light no man can extinguish.

"In the Synoptic Gospels," says Uhlhorn, . . . "we have what was then told among the people, what the evangelists related on their missionary journeys, and on the occasions of religious service in the church. It is in its simplest form in Mark; in Matthew, the Lord's discourses are especially prominent; while Luke makes the transition from evangelist to historian. . . . The Gospel of Matthew represents Christ as he appeared to a Jewish Christian, who saw above all in Jesus the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament. The Gospel of Luke, on the other side, represents him, according to the reflection of his image in the mind of a Gentile Christian, as the second Adam. So that we may have the likeness of Him who shall be both the light of the Gentiles and the glory of Israel. To all this is added the fourth Gospel, . . . the work of one man,—of that disciple who leaned on the Lord's breast, who looked deepest into the deeps of his nature, and was therefore able to present his image as the image of the only begotten Son of God, whose glory he had beheld.

"The possession of the one Gospel in its fourfold form imposes upon the Church the task of knowing the four portraits, which are but one, as one, in order to gain the only full and complete idea of our Lord. . . . This task is not to be accomplished by counting

the features of his portrait; by a mere book account of his sayings and doings. This would not be sufficient for the likeness of an ordinary man, least of all for the image of Christ. It is rather a moral task; for they alone can know him who open their hearts to him—receive his life in themselves; and only in the measure in which his life pours itself into the church, and takes definite form within her, only in that measure is the task to be fulfilled. . . . Yet this task is fulfilled daily by every simple Christian soul, who, without learning and science, reads the Gospels in faith, and sees in all four the same original likeness of him who is its life, and has taken from within it the genuine historical picture of him who dwelt and worked among us—an historical person, and yet exalted above all time; the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.”

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